



THE MINISTRY IN THE
Methodist Heritage

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Methodist Heritage

Edited by
GERALD O. McCULLOH

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

"The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage" was the theme of the first Convocation of Methodist Theological Faculties held in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Methodist Board of Education, July 3-5, 1959. The Convocation was sponsored by the Department of Ministerial Education of the Board of Education.

This volume consists of the papers presented at the Convocation. The editor and the Department of Ministerial Education wish to express their deep appreciation to the contributors whose insights both enriched the Convocation discussions and brought added understanding of the office of the ministry in Methodism. This inquiry into the meaning of the ministry marks the beginning of a series of major studies of the ministry by those persons uniquely responsible for Methodist ministerial education.

GERALD O. McCULLOH

Director of Theological Education

I

The Ministry in Methodism In the Eighteenth Century

David C. Shipley

THE First Convocation of Methodist Theological Faculties is an occasion conjuring more than ordinary concerns. Our study here and the clarification of our queries are but part (a most imperative part) of that *continuing* process of judgment and response in which the church and those of us involved in her educational mission are relentlessly involved.

This *continuing process* we share in the common life of the church everywhere. And it is in no way foreign to Methodism. In its origins Methodism was *not* a church. It was a "people" within the church, and to this day "the people called Methodists" are among the few that have never *at any time* severed themselves from the Church catholic and ecumenical.

We shall give attention, gratefully, to our heritage as Methodists within the common life of the church. And this attention will have direct relevance respecting the ways through which this heritage may affect our primary responsibilities in the educative *continuum* from which Methodism in the United States will, in great measure, select its ministry in the years ahead. Our concern with the past, however, is to rediscover those permanent patterns of vitality yet dynamic in Methodism's ministry in order the better to articulate this heritage in terms of the mandates of contemporary forms of communication and servanthood.

The continuing process of judgment and response to which reference has been made is probably best signified by the publications issued as the reports of *The Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada* under the sponsorship of the American Association of Theological Schools and

directed by Professors H. R. Niebuhr, D. D. Williams, and James M. Gustafson. In this project the format determinative for the study is really indicated by the title of Professor Niebuhr's initial volume: *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*!¹ The presentations of the later volume, entitled *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*,² follow the same structural thesis, viz., the doctrine of the church provides the only valid presuppositions requisite for the adumbration of the ministerial offices. This is authentic logic and history.

Within American Methodism, the recent *Papers on The Theology of Mission*,³ prepared by British and American scholars for the Division of World Missions of The Methodist Church, are structured precisely by the same Niebuhrian pattern. The papers are brilliantly succinct but note some of the assigned titles for the studies: "The Different Understandings of the Church and Its Ministry which are Found in the Major Confessional Streams of the Christian Church" by Professor Harvey H. Potthof of Iliff; "The Methodist Conception of the Church and The Ministry" by Professor A. Raymond George of Wesley College, Headingly, Leeds, England; and "The Methodist Understanding of the Church and Its Ministry" by Professor S. Paul Schilling of Boston University. The other contributing scholars follow this same assigned procedural premise: When we understand the nature and purpose of the church, then only shall we more clearly discern the meaning and function of the ministry. Who dares to gainsay the obvious—or the apparently obvious?

Primary considerations would lead us to affirm that this procedural premise is wholly inapplicable to an analysis of the ministerial responsibilities as expressed in the Methodism of the eighteenth century. In the years of its genesis the Wesleyan societies would not have countenanced the cognomen "church" applied to themselves.

On the other hand, however, could it not be that the ministry of Methodism in the eighteenth century did arise out of a profound awareness of lost vocations endemic to the vital nature of the church? This paper proposes to be a kind of commentary

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from history on the side of the affirmative. We shall agree with the Niebuhrian premise that the understanding of the ministry has its genesis in the revelatory, cognitive self-understanding of the church, but it will be further asserted that the contemporary discussions of the nature and the doctrine of the church pointedly fail, for the most part, to recognize a profoundly meaningful dimension of that understanding as revealingly recapitulated in the ministry of early Methodism. Methodism's eighteenth-century ministry rediscovered, revitalized, and became subject to indispensable vocations of the Church catholic and ecumenical which had too long been neglected.

I

Twentieth-century Methodism traces its origin, primarily, to the societies instituted under the organizing genius of John Wesley. Eighteenth-century Methodism, however, did not belong exclusively to the Wesleyan societies. The founders of modern Methodism were themselves a part of a more inclusive Methodism. There were Wesleyan Methodists, Methodists of the Whitefield-Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, and Church Evangelicals. Canon Overton wrote:

Even the terms by which they are distinguished can hardly be called distinguishing terms in the eighteenth century. For all Methodists would have wished to be called Evangelicals, and all Evangelicals, whether they wished it or no, were called Methodists.*

It is not known how the term Methodist arose in British nomenclature. The word had been used in the seventeenth century to designate religious sectaries. In 1639, e.g., reference is made in a Lambeth sermon to those "plain, pack-staff Methodists who esteem all flowers of rhetoric. . . . no better than profane spells." In 1693, a pamphlet was published which discussed the "Principles of the New Methodists in the great point of Justification." Seventeenth-century Methodists were without doubt some individualistic expression of Puritanism.

Just how, in turn, the epithet "Methodist" was assigned to

the participants in the Evangelical Revival has not yet been determined.

The period 1735-1739 is usually taken as the time of the initial awakening in England—the dates coinciding with the inauguration of the *itinerant* ministries of George Whitefield and the Wesleys. It should be noted, however, that prior to these dates, as early as 1730-1732, John Tennant, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Freehold, New Jersey, was initiating a remarkable itinerant ministry in the Middle Colonies.

The “dawn of the Revival” in Britain occurred in the religious life of Wales. Griffith Jones, “the morning star of the Methodist revival,” was preaching in and itinerating out from his Llandowrar parish twenty years before the “conversions” of the Wesleys. The work of Jones was carried on by Howell Harris, William Rowlands, James Powell and others.⁶ “Through the assistance, later, of Whitefield, Rowlands, Powell, and William Williams with three lay preachers, Howell Harris, J. Umphreys, and John Cennick organized at Waterford in Wales the first Welsh Calvinist Methodist Conference on January 5, 1743. The first group, therefore, officially to bear the name Methodist was this Welsh Conference established a year and a half prior to John Wesley’s first conference in 1744.”⁷

Almost contemporaneous, and apparently wholly unrelated to, the noteworthy occurrences in the church life of America and Wales, the preaching of James Robe of Kilsyth, Scotland, was accompanied by what he styled “a glorious revival of the work of God.”⁸ He, too, began itinerating from parish to parish in the Church of Scotland, fulfilling the vocation of “preacher.” And this work was in progress ten years before the Wesleys and Whitefield had matriculated in Oxford or formed a Holy Club.

Accordingly, the Revival in Britain had its genesis long before the three dates (two in 1729 and one, May 20, 1738) which Wesley indicated.⁹

Both John and Charles Wesley in 1738 began their itinerant ministries as clergymen of the Church of England unassigned to parishes—a provocatively irregular status, one may add. Whitefield had set the pattern, but there is no reason to believe

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that John Wesley was, at the beginning, in any wise influenced by Whitefield's prior action.

The ministers, therefore, who were first called "Methodist" were *not* "Methodist ministers." They were clergymen of the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, and both the Anglican and Presbyterian churches in Wales. Furthermore, please note that the term Methodist, as a nickname, was first popularized as designating clergymen, then lay-preachers, and only lastly as referent to societies. History has united, genetically, the terms "Methodist and preacher."

Religious societies had been functioning in England decades prior to the Revival. Under royal proclamation in 1700, "Societies for the Reformation of Manners and Morals" were established.¹⁰ These had remarkable growth. Parenthetically one may take cognizance of the fact that it was in one of these societies chartered by the King, viz., the one in Aldersgate Street, that John Wesley experienced the events associated with May 24, 1738. The common understanding that Aldersgate Street Society was a Moravian group is widely questioned. But the Society at Fetter Lane where Wesley first associated himself was, contrary to Tyerman and Whitehead, never associated with the Moravians. It was a Church of England Society.¹¹

What were some of the definitive elements in the "more ample ministry"? Firstly, as their contemporaries understood them, these clergy nicknamed Methodist were so designated because of their preaching, not necessarily *what* they preached (controversial dissimilarities were too numerous to mention), nor, *how* they preached (there were almost limitless varieties among them). They were called Methodists, primarily, by the fact *that* they preached. They were convinced a prime requisite of the clergy was to preach, in season and out of season. They meant to preach—not to read sermons prepared by others or themselves. Hence, a Methodist clergyman was one who, while not neglecting, indeed being more than ever before concerned with his pastoral and priestly offices, was now awakened to the mandate of preaching—submitting to be a bearer of the vital tradition, the dynamic *kerygma*, ensconced in Bible, Prayer

book, Articles, and Homilies from the heart of the dead past cross the void to the living present in modes of communication uniquely amenable to the hungers of his own generation of men.

Secondly, the Methodist dimension of the ministry involved the recognition that the vocation of preaching is a response to the act of God in bestowing "the call to preach" and the personal presence of the Holy Spirit to assure the sole source of power for the actualization of that "call."¹² The Anglican clergy called Methodists had met the demands (more rigorous than we are wont to believe) of the Church of England respecting gifts for the priesthood, but along with these they had also recognized another special call and gift which constituted an inescapable mandate. As Wesley says:

I allow, that it is highly expedient, whoever preaches in His Name should have an outward as well as an inward call; but that it is *absolutely necessary* I deny.¹³

The assertion of the "inward call to preach" characterizes, distinctively, the Wesleyan Methodist understanding of the ministry—witness the care with which this issue is guarded to this day in the *Discipline* of Methodism.

Thirdly, the Anglican priest who became a preacher called Methodist was distinguished by an unquenchable sense of urgency manifested by itinerancy. It was not the love of travel that kept him on the move. It was, rather, a profound intuition that the life of the church, though far from moribund, was really crucially at stake *in his generation*. The geographical limitations of the parish ministry, with its acknowledged crossable boundaries were, indeed, the precise occasions for the creeping paralysis of the Church militant. Dead parishes could become the vaults which would turn the church into a mausoleum. The call to preach—to participate in the actual vivifying of the church—simply could not be constrained by civil and ecclesiastical law.

Wesley had to make a major decision on this categorical issue. He never doubted that he was a loyal priest of the Church of

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England, albeit, on this principle of contention he knew himself to be a loyal *disobedient* priest. At the time he wrote to Hervey:

Man forbids me to (preach) in another's parish: that is, in effect, to do it at all; seeing I have no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom, then, shall I hear, God or man? . . . Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare, unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it.¹⁴

Mention has centered on those Anglican priests who were called Methodists "whether they wished it or no." Who were they? Nearly all of them were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge University. They were men of more than ordinary scholastic acumen and achievement. Every one of them was a scholar. Representative biographies of Oxonians may be found in the book by Marcus Loane, *Oxford and the Evangelical Succession*.¹⁵ Familiar names are John Newton, Thomas Scott, Richard Cecil, and Daniel Wilson. The books on the life and work of George Whitefield are widely known though none will surpass the superb study of that "wayfaring witness" by Stuart C. Henry.¹⁶ Mr. Loane also makes us his debtor in his volume, *Cambridge and the Evangelical Succession*.¹⁷ Wesleyan Methodists have too long neglected the heritage shared with such men as William Grimshaw, John Berridge, Henry Venn, Charles Simeon and Henry Martyn, to mention only a few. In terms of the contribution of dynamic personalities, eighteenth-century Methodism owed far more to Cambridge University than to Oxford. Hence, it is most fitting that Wesley House should find its home at Cambridge.

It will be noted that familiar Methodist names are associated with John and Charles Wesley, but few of the university evangelicals came under the Wesleyan discipline. Besides Edward Perronet the only other university man was John William Fletcher of the University of Geneva, Switzerland, and he never

was listed as a member of Conference. James Hervey and Walker of Truro were also confreres in the work of the Wesleys.

The general group of Anglicans called "Methodists" may be divided into three categories. The first group was made up of those parish priests who preached regularly—and often—in their own churches and who itinerated into other parishes *only* on invitation of their brethren. These, also, gladly itinerated throughout the Wesley Connexion where there were "chapels" and "preaching places" including, on occasion, field-preaching. Wesley's *Journals* are replete with references to such, e.g., John Berridge, Fletcher, Hervey, Newton, and many others. The men, furthermore, were convinced of the necessity for "Societies" which would carry through the work of God symbolized by the hearing and preaching of the Word. They welcomed and encouraged for the most part the organization of Wesley's societies in their own parishes.

A second group is illustrated most singularly by George Whitefield. He was a priest without a parish who created the specialized vocation in Anglo-American Protestantism, now designated the "evangelist." Preaching, as a function of the ministry, was torn loose from both the geography and the sociology of the church. Many times disdaining the pulpit he chose rather the steps of public edifices, private drawing rooms, the balconies of urbanite homes as well as the public parks and the fields as the *loci classici* of the new type of preaching. This placed the evangelist, as a person, at the center of attention and for most practicable purposes *the fact of and need for* the church became at best only a secondary consideration. Consequently the Whitefield-Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, as it came to be named, never developed "societies" for the enhancing of *life in the church*. The connexion did acquire a vast number of "chapels" and "preaching places" but it is quite apparent both as to "how" and "why" this group soon became a separate "evangelistic" denomination disparate from the Church of England and even from the Dissenting groups. George Whitefield, in a unique way, set the pattern for a type of evangelism that inevitably rent the unity of the church.

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The third group, of course, is the Wesleyan movement in the Church of England. The determinative factor here is the recognition of the limitations of preaching. It has been noted that the term Methodist referred to a rediscovery of the necessary dimension of preaching as a factor in a more ample ministry. Preaching ensuing from a special "call" and the reception of needed gifts, however, was clearly discerned to be but a part of the ministry of the church. Preaching, declared Wesley, dare not be separated, as a ministerial office from the concomitant of "after-care" or the development of societies within the parish of the church. To Wesley, preaching could be worse than useless persiflage. He wrote:

I am more and more convinced that the Devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half awakened, and then left to themselves to fall asleep again: therefore, I determine, by the grace of God, not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow.¹⁸

The means of the "follow up" adopted by Wesley, and certain other church evangelicals, was a redemptive factor in the rediscovery of the vocation of preaching. The societies saved Wesley from becoming an evangelist as that term is now commonly understood. As fulfilled by Whitefield (and most evangelists since) the office of the evangelist was soundly repudiated by Wesley. (Students are sometimes surprised to discover that Wesley never gave an "altar call" and would have forcefully excoriated such a suggestion.)

The Wesleyan preacher was required to organize societies. Preaching emanating from a special "call" is indispensable to the church, but, functionally, as distinct from the offices of pastor and priest, life in the society is a mandatory part of the fulfillment of that call to preach. This, in large measure, is the essence of Wesley's contribution to the ministry of the Church of England in the eighteenth century.

In recapitulation we may note that "the call to preach" is a unilaterally received vocation *in the context of the church*. The call from the Holy Spirit lays hold upon ordained and lay

members of the church, including surprisingly enough, lay-women. "The call to preach" is, in no sense, definitively related to the doctrine of the orders of the ministry. Itinerant Methodist preachers had a vocation which, by every canonical criterion, demanded the presupposition of a faithful active ministry both pastoral and sacramental in the contiguous living church.

Analogies are always in some measure erroneous, but could it not be that the Wesleyan Methodist preachers, both those ordained to and fulfilling the vocation of pastor-priest as well as lay-preachers, constitute a movement analogous to the rise of the orders of preaching friars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Roman Catholic Europe? Fr. Maximin Piette¹⁹ has asserted, following the suggestion of the late H. B. Workman,²⁰ that the Wesleys were *et hoc genus omne* with Franciscans. One must, however, assuredly include also the Dominican "Order of Preachers" and certain developments, later, in the Society of Jesus for an adequate historical analogue to John Wesley's Methodist preachers—ordained and otherwise. Striking similarities are forthcoming as one studies the problem Wesley confronted in loyally relating his preachers and his societies to the Anglican Church and the similar problems of St. Francis, St. Dominic, and St. Ignatius of Loyola in their attempts to organize a uniquely needed vocation in the church which would still remain loyally cognizant of the priestly-pastoral-hierarchical ministry of the Roman Church.

Wesley, like the founders of the orders of the preaching friars discerned that preaching, in and of itself, may become demonic. The preacher, according to Wesley, must face his auditors "in society" where the hearers may "talk-back," and where inadequacy and failure in communication might be corrected by the nuances of interpersonal relationships rather than by the sophisticated canons of abstractionism which, indeed, existed even in the eighteenth-century forms of language analysis. (We may recall that at Lincoln College, Oxford, Wesley was an instructor in logic and, regrettably, no study has yet appeared which investigates the profoundly significant logical theory which informed both his writing and public utterance.)

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The basic Wesleyan mandate remained paramount in both Britain and America, viz., no preaching apart from intention to *form or rehabilitate* "societies" in the existent church.

It may be asked now: (1) How did Wesley conceive the ministry of the itinerant preacher to be related to the pastoral-priestly ministry of the parson in the parish to which each member of the Society was assigned; and (2) How was the itinerant-preacher to understand his *ab extra* ministry to the member of the Society?

To the first query one may only respond that Wesley was less sensitive than his fellow priests had a right to expect. He did, however, insist that each Methodist Society member prepare for and wait upon the reception of the Eucharist from the hands of their Church of England minister. They should also attend upon his reading of morning and evening prayer and the sermon, if any; and that most especially on Sunday. In theory, he convinced himself that he had subtracted nothing from the loyalty of parishioner to parish and priest, but had, on the contrary, increased participation of Society members not only in the life of the parish, but even more importantly in the life of the national church. This increased participation, he was convinced, would eventuate from his sending lay-preachers into the parish and not infrequently by building a chapel for preaching and sacramental services under his personal ownership within the bounds of a fellow priest's parish. In many cases, Wesley's theory simply could not work. John Fletcher who was devoted to Wesley still wrote to a friend:

The coming of Mr. Wesley's preachers into my parish gives me no uneasiness. As I am sensible that everybody does better . . . than myself . . . I rejoice that the work of God goes on by any instrument . . . How far it might have been expedient to have postponed (Methodist) preaching regularly in my parish, till the minister of . . . parish had been reconciled to the invasion of his; and how far this might have made my way smoother, I do not pretend to determine.²¹

Furthermore, the regularly scheduled meetings of the classes in the Society, the incessant visitation of members by class leaders and preachers, the frequent services of preaching, the

love feasts and festivals, and the intrusive celebration of Holy Communion within the parish by Wesley, or one of his ordained, itinerant colleagues could not but have affected the zeal and participation of the Methodist in his parish church life, if, for no other reason, than the factor of time and human energy left over from a minimum twelve- to fourteen-hour day of work. Here, again, if Wesley had not been blind to acts which we must designate unbrotherly—if not downright wrong—would he have been able to actualize that ministry which he was certain had the supportive blessing of the Almighty? In times of epochal cruciality—and such were the times at the mid-eighteenth century in the Church of England (we now know in retrospect)—in such times, it is not impossible for the good so to frustrate and disarm the better, that the best must become surgically ruthless. Such, in any case, was John Wesley. He was a ruthless man—and in ruthlessly having his own way in the Church of England, history permitted him to inaugurate through Methodism, movements and concerns that even now are too young, too proliferative and lacking in self-understanding for adequate evaluation.

Respecting the second query, the determinative responsibility of the Methodist preacher itinerating in another man's parish was to *preach*. It may be pointed out, in passing, that in British Methodism during Wesley's lifetime no preacher was ever assigned to a "circuit" of Societies independent of prior recognition of the authoritative status of the parish minister and the parish within which the Society existed. Indeed, it was not until 1836 that the British Wesleyans permitted their preachers to be called "Reverend," "Minister," or "Pastor," and that the last restriction was taken from conference members respecting the administration of the eucharist vis-a-vis the practice and rubric of the Church of England. Accordingly, the Methodist preacher dared not to think of acting in the place of the pastor-priest in whose jurisdiction he worked.

But it has been noted Methodist preaching had, always, to be related to auditors in Society. This, of course, involved the itinerant, inevitably, in the complexities of interpersonal relation-

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ships within the Society. In these relationships he had, perforce, to jettison authoritative status. He became one of the persons in and of the Society. He could not think of himself as possessing the power of the pastor or of functioning in that role, but, however designated, the itinerant practiced pastoral counseling. Indeed the statusless basis of permissiveness characteristic of the preacher in this situation, in no small measure, antedates much that is now taught in our schools of pastoral counseling.

Furthermore, relationship in Society meant mutuality of concern. It is wholly false to categorize Methodist preaching simply as propaedeutic to conversion and preparation for heaven. This might have been the aim of an evangelist but the Methodist preacher preached in order that he might found and strengthen life in this world now in the Methodist Society as, to quote, "a foretaste of heavenly fellowship." And this had both social, political, and economic implications. The Methodists were under mandate to help each other.

Wesley addressed a conference in London in the forties:

I reminded the United Society that many of our brethren . . . had not needful food; many were destitute of convenient clothing; many were out of business, and that without their own fault; and many were sick and ready to perish: that I had done what in me lay to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to employ the poor . . . and therefore desired all . . . :

1. To bring what clothes each could spare, to be distributed among those that wanted most.
2. To give weekly, a penny, or what they could afford, for the relief of the poor and the sick.

My design, I told them, is to employ, for the present, all the women who are out of business, and desire it, in knitting. To these women we will give the common price for what they do; and then add, according as they need.²⁸

Wesley not only led the way; characteristically, he demanded that the preachers follow him. The *Journal* indicates another dimension of the Methodist preacher's ministry.

In the afternoon I visited many of the sick; but such scenes, who could see them unmoved? There are none such to be found in a

pagan country. If any of the Indians in Georgia were sick (which, indeed, exceedingly rarely happened till they learned gluttony and drunkenness from the Christians) those that were near him gave whatever he wanted. O, who will convert the English into honest heathens!

On Friday and Saturday I visited as many more as I could. I found some in their cells underground, others in their garretts, half starved both with cold and hunger, added to weakness and pain. But I found not one of them unemployed who was able to crawl about the room. So wickedly, devilishly false is that common objection, "They are poor only because they are idle."²³

But was the concern only for the Society member? No, Wesley meant that the whole world was his parish respecting, precisely, this kind of ministry. Methodists must go beyond the circle of Methodists. And they did. John Gardner, a Smithfield Methodist, organized in 1785 *The Strangers' Friend Society* to aid "poor strangers, having no parish, or friend at hand to help them." After Wesley surveyed the rules for this Society as set forth by Gardner, he wrote to him:

I like the design and rules of your little Society and hope you will do good to many. I will subscribe three pence per week, and will give you a guinea in advance if you will call on me Saturday morning.²⁴

Branches proliferated in many towns and still exist in Bristol and Dublin.²⁵

It does little good to make the attempt to bring Wesley within the structural formulations of the Social Gospel movement of the nineteenth century. It is equally futile, however, to neglect the profound social concerns actualized day by day in the ministry and life of the eighteenth-century Methodists. It is possible, easily to wave them aside as suffering somewhat the same consequences as the theories of mutual aid asserted by Tolstoy and Count Kropotkin, but the heritage is irrefragable.

Other facets in the ministry "within the Society within the Church," come readily to mind. One further aspect, however, should probably be mentioned, *viz.*, the category of the Methodist preachers' ministry to each other. This had many dimensions but, for our purposes, we may note the ministry of teaching.

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In Wesley's conference, or associated closely with it, there were scholarly and academically dedicated fellow Anglican priests. These men, in concert with Wesley, were fully concerned with the issue of instruction and training of the lay-itinerant preachers. How was it met?

First, Wesley met the problem by indicating a program of reading and study. Somewhat indirectly for this forthright man, the program centered in Wesley's own publications to which, later, were added the volumes of Fletcher's works. The chief factor in this program was the reading of sermons and eventually the prized excerpts from the Church Fathers and the works of the Christian writers across the centuries as finally published in fifty-six volumes.

Furthermore, Wesley set himself the task of teacher to preachers, not just through phenomenal correspondence but most especially the sessions of the annual conference. Through careful preparation Wesley produced for each conference a catechetical dialectic of question and answer which became an invaluable educative tool in adapting theological affirmation to contemporary queries and controversies.

In his later years he discerned the need for selecting a successor who would continue the pedagogical tasks of the annual conference in his stead. He had but one choice, that was John Fletcher. He wrote a letter to Fletcher which betrays some of the urgency he felt.

But the wise men of the world say, "when Mr. Wesley drops, then all is at an end!" And so it surely will unless before God calls him hence, one is found to stand in his place . . . But who is sufficient for these things? Qualified to preside. . . He must have a knowledge particularly of Methodist doctrine and discipline . . . But has God provided one so qualified? Who is he? Thou art the man! Come out in the name of God . . . Come while I am alive."⁶

Fletcher was too overwhelmed to accept Wesley's proffer, and, as it turned out, he died in 1785, six years prior to Wesley. Fletcher, however, continued to write and his works became, in the eighteenth century, the significantly powerful systematic delineation of Wesleyan Methodist theology and the major staff

in the education of the preachers. Wesley made no realistic preparation for a successor in this area of theological instruction. Not unlike Methodists of another era, he had stopped simply with hope for a miracle.

Endemic to instruction through books, and the dialectical catechisms of annual conferences, was the abiding, unplanned functioning of what, in our day, we would call "field education." First, the scholarly Anglican clergy associated with the Wesleys, as well as the Wesley brothers themselves, would each take with them younger, or at least inexperienced, lay-preachers. The elder, in years or experience, would counsel, inform, and share his deepest thoughts and doubts with the associate who accompanied on the itineration. The lay-preacher would learn by instruction, observation, and not inconsiderably by "doing."

After the death of Wesley, British Methodism took some three decades to form the theological college as preparatory school for the "field education" of the young preacher under an elder-in-circuit, a practice still maintained assiduously by the British. The point in this brief notation, however, is that the Methodist preacher bears responsibility for the education of his colleagues—and, that this responsibility is, indeed, a mandate of his ministry.

In review, it has been suggested that the understanding of the Methodist ministry in Britain in the eighteenth century includes at least these factors: (1) They were preachers (for better and sometimes for worse); (2) they were motivated by the gift and call of God designated the "call to preach"; and (3) the urgency of the cruciality in the life of the National Church demanded itinerancy. To these elements was added the profoundly significant insight that preaching is never enough; preaching is necessary to the forming of societies of auditors and workers dedicated to the task of reviving the National Church. This ministry involved problems in relationship to Anglican clergy who did not share the Methodist "Call," and, it also involved a complex of ministries within the societies, not least of which, was an understanding of the responsibility of mutual aid and a judgmentally and prophetically redemptive hope for society.

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Last, we have noted the prime requirement of ministering, educationally, to the colleague in the conference.

II

As in England, the term Methodist as used in the Colonies apparently applied first to preachers—and these assuredly were *not* of Wesleyan origin or persuasion. An unpublished manuscript by J. Manning Potts, entitled *Who Were the First Methodists in America*,²⁷ documents the present impossibility of finding an answer to the query. Professor W. W. Sweet arrived at the conclusion that the first preachers called Methodist originating in the Colonies were New Light Presbyterians,²⁸ but the point is that the term was applied first to preachers and according to available history when these New Light "Methodist" preachers did organize societies they were Presbyterian churches.

But British Methodist itinerant lay-preachers did at long last make their way from Wesleyan societies to the New World. Where did they first preach? This is still debated by the biographers of Robert Strawbridge and Philip Embury. Understandably they began the work in the colonies as itinerants.

The "Call to Preach" was a phenomenon of evangelical life in the colonies, too. It has always been recognized as of singular significance for the American Methodists (See *Methodist Discipline*, 1956, Part III, Chap. I, paragraph 302). In our *Discipline*, the privilege of administering Holy Communion requires the *objective* historical act of ordination, while admission to Conference requires the *subjective* awareness of the "Call to Preach." Both are, in a sense, quasi-sacramental and both are, in the rubric of the *Discipline*, definitively associated to the work of the Holy Spirit.

George Fox had said, in effect, speak not in meeting unless "moved by the Spirit"; John Wesley said, preach not in meeting, unless called by the Spirit to the office of preaching. The Holy Spirit consecrates, through ordination, to the administering of the Eucharist in the Church catholic; the same Holy Spirit empowers, through the "call to preach," to the proclamation of

the Apostolic Witness in the Church ecumenical—and for the disciplining of this office, Methodist preachers, in the beginning, established conferences. The documentation from this early period is mountainous but please permit a reference to just one person: Benjamin Abbot (1732-1796). In his journal he wrote, (*circa* 1776):

About this time the government was drafting the militia to go into the service of their country; among others the lot fell on me to go; but as I had a call to preach, I could not think of going out to fight; however, I had to pay a sum of money sufficient to procure another man to go in my place.²⁹

The call to preach released him from fighting but the subsequent entry in his journal reads, "At my next appointment I tore up Calvinism."

Jettisoning every attempt to draw parallels between the conception of the ministry in Wesley's Methodism and that in the United States (it really is quite impossible anyway) may I be indulged a footnote on the issue of the Methodist preacher's ministerial responsibilities for the theological education of his younger colleagues? The distinctions on this point between the two Methodisms are quite significant.

The American Methodists followed the British in adopting the structure of theological field-education. It was not until near the middle of the nineteenth century that theological schools began to replace study-in-the-field under the tutelage of the Elder. The Reverend Mr. Edmund S. James wrote in 1839 concerning nearly a century of training of ministers. He describes the system then in vogue. He is critical of theological schools in New England and New Jersey, then asserts that Jesus indicated the optimum plan of training; allowing:

I have never learned of any school for the education of ministers that so nearly resembled this as that of the itinerant ministry of the Methodist Church . . . In this school, an aged and experienced minister, the best possible representative of Christ, takes a young man to travel and labor with him, as much as circumstances will allow, he directing his labors, and studies, and watching over his piety and conduct.³⁰

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This is quite in common with the early British system but James introduces the American *addendum*:

But that our young men, before they graduate to this school of the ministry, need greater literary advantages than those now furnished by the Church, is unquestionable. That there ought to be some special provision for giving them some literary advantages is equally clear . . . If our young men are generally educated, a ministry selected out of such a class of educated young men must necessarily be a ministry enjoying literary advantages. Probably this is the most direct bearing which education has upon the Methodist ministry. Educate all, and you must and will educate the ministry.³¹

This conclusion has never been drawn by the ministry of British Methodism. The heritage of this augmented conception of the ministry still awaits articulation in American Methodism.

The determinative issue raised in both English and American Methodism, however, is that education *for* the ministry is a function of the ministry—including of course the lay-ministry. Even today, whatever else may be placed upon the mandate laden Methodist theological school, we shall deny a precious birthright should we fail to see ourselves as the surrogates of the ministry of Methodism's "traveling preachers" on whose behalf and in whose name we fulfill our lesser ministries.

III

American Methodism is thankful for the recent tutelage of her own scholars such as Clarence Tucker Craig,³² J. Robert Nelson,³³ and Claude Welch³⁴ on the doctrine of the church. Their researches recapitulate and probe discerning facets in the ontology and eschatology of the church. These volumes, do not mitigate the function of the preacher in the nature of the ministry emanating from the purpose of the church. It is, however, to Professor Albert C. Outler that Methodism is particularly indebted for making crucial in the doctrine of the church the Methodist sense of preaching vocation. In an address before the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at Bossey in 1956 he stated:

In general Methodist teaching, the Church is not an extension of

the Incarnation, but rather of *the Apostolic Witness*. The most important "definition" of the Church is by her *evangelistic mission*.³⁵

One may raise a caveat over the use of the word evangelistic in this context, and Professor S. Paul Schilling has suggested other significant *addenda* required for a more coherently inclusive definition of the church.³⁶ Dr. Outler's later work, *The Christian Faith and the Unity We Seek*,³⁷ only adumbrates the Bossey thesis to include the ecumenism of the centuries. *The Apostolic Witness* and the "handing over" of the vital *paradosis* (tradition) as a purpose of the church establish explicitly for the function of preaching what has been too long only implicit in our understanding of the task of the church and its ministry. In any case, here is a son of the parsonage who brings to ecumenical definitions of the church the teaching labors of generations of Methodist preachers in needed companionship with those preachers called of God everywhere and always.

If St. Francis, St. Dominic, and St. Ignatius of Loyola discerned the purpose of the church as requiring at times, a "called," dedicated, and divinely consecrated "order of preachers" to re-awaken, and re-enliven the "Body of Christ" with its sacred pastoral and sacramental priesthood, then, while ours is another and more inclusive task for our own day, it is not inappropriate that we beholdenly recollect John Wesley and his Bands of "traveling preachers."

NOTES

1. H. R. Niebuhr, *op. cit.* N.Y. Harper & Bros., 1956.
2. H. R. Niebuhr, D. D. Williams, *op. cit.*, N.Y. Harper & Bros., 1956.
3. Selected Mailing Only. Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1958.
4. J. H. Overton, *The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century*. London: Longmans Green and Co., 1900, p. 45.
5. See Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*. N.Y. Harper & Bros., 1872. Vol. I, p. 67.
6. James Hughes, *Welsh Reformers*. London: James Nisbet and Co. 1868, pp. 118 ff.
7. For a complete narrative see, A. D. Belden, *The Great Awakener* Nashville, Tenn.: Cokesbury Press, 1930, pp. 22 ff.
8. James Robe, *A Faithful Narrative*, pamphlet. Edinburgh, 1742.
9. See J. Wesley, *Works*, Vol. 13, p. 307; and Vol. I, p. 422. London: Epworth Press, 1872.
10. Cf. John S. Simon, *John Wesley and The Religious Societies*. London:

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The Epworth Press, 1921.

11. J. Wesley, *Journal* (Ed. N. Curnock) Vol. I, p. 458; Vol. II, p. 121.

12. The writer is indebted to Professor John N. S. Score, II, of Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, for the insightful discernment and validation of this issue. Professor Score presents a full discussion of the "Call" in research now being prepared for presentation to the Graduate School of Duke University.

13. J. Wesley, *The Standard Sermons* (Edited by E. H. Sugden) London: Epworth Press, 1921. Vol. II, p. 119.

14. J. Wesley, *Letters* (Edited by J. Telford) London: Epworth Press, 1931. Vol. I, p. 286.

15. Marcus Loane, *op. cit.* London: Lutterworth Press, 1950.

16. Stuart C. Henry, *George Whitefield*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1957.

17. Marcus Loane, *op. cit.*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1952.

18. J. Wesley, *Journal* (Edition cited) Vol. III, p. 71.

19. Maximin Piette (Tr. by J. B. Howard), *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*. N.Y.: Sheed and Ward, 1937.

20. H. B. Workman, *The Place of Methodism in the Catholic Church*. N.Y.: Methodist Book Concern, 1921, also H. B. Workman, *Methodism*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1912.

21. John Fletcher (Editor, Melville Horne) *The Posthumous Works of the Rev. John Fletcher*. N.Y.: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1824. p. 150.

22. J. Wesley, *Journal*, *op. cit.* Vol. II, pp. 453-454.

23. J. Wesley, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 52.

24. J. Wesley, *Letters*, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 308.

25. For a fuller discussion of these matters, see *inter alia*, Henry Carter, *The Methodist Heritage*, N.Y. Abingdon Press, 1951.

26. L. Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884, quotes this letter. p. 1.

27. Cp. W. W. Sweet, *Virginia Methodism*. Richmond, Va.: Whittet and Sheperson, 1955, for reference and quotation, *vide*. p. 30.

28. W. W. Sweet, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

29. John Firth, *Experiences and Gospel Labors of the Reverend Benjamin Abbott (1732-1796)*. N.Y. T. Mason and G. Lane, 1836. p. 45.

30. Article by E. S. James in *The Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* Vol. 22 New Series, Vol. XI, 1840.

31. *Ibid.*

32. C. T. Craig, *The Nature of the Church*. London: S.C.M. Press, 1952.

33. J. Robert Nelson: *The Realm of Redemption*. London: Epworth Press, 1948.

34. Claude Welch, *The Reality of the Church*. N.Y. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

35. A. C. Outler: mimeographed copy.

36. S. Paul Schilling, *Papers on the Theology of Mission*. N.Y. Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1958. p. 30; but see the whole article pp. 24-36.

37. A. C. Outler, *The Christian Faith and The Unity We Seek*. N.Y. Oxford University Press, 1958.

II

The Americanization of the Wesleyan Itinerant

Frederick A. Norwood

I

THE TIME is arrived," wrote John Wesley to George Shadford in 1773, "for you to embark for America. . . . I let you loose in America, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can. Once again the essentially missionary character of the Methodist ministry was made evident. The alteration of this character over the course of some one hundred and seventy-five years of American history is one of the principal themes of this paper.

Before proceeding further it is important to clarify and specify the topic at hand. The original topic was distinguished by an exceedingly wide degree of latitude: "Cultural and Sociological Influences on the American Methodist Ministry in the Nineteenth Century." I dare not complain that my topic was too narrowly defined! One of the main problems, therefore, was the exclusion of many developments in the interests of simplicity, brevity, and unity. The topic would suggest that the main focus of concern would be with nontheological factors; and yet this cannot be isolated from the theological context. Factors growing out of the Revolutionary and Civil wars are excluded, since this is not intended to be a paper on problems of church and state nor on the Great Schism in Methodism. In each case we recognize, in passing, immense forces. The long, sad chronicle of compromise and delay on the issue of slavery left its permanent marks on the ministers of our church. Some of these are quite obvious in the sectional loyalties in which you and I are involved. One of the most poignant tragedies in the history

Christianity is to be found in the process leading from the uncompromising integrity of the Christmas Conference as recorded in its answer to the forty-second question of the *Discipline*, "What methods can we take to extirpate slavery?" to the spineless capitulation of the Episcopal Address of 1836, which advised "that the only safe, Scriptural, and prudent way for us, both as ministers and people, to take, is wholly to refrain from this agitating subject. . . ."²

But these familiar—and unrewarding—themes are excluded. Also excluded are industrial and church-state problems as such. The cultural influences usually lumped together as romanticism are also left outside. But much of what we have to say will reflect its pervading presence in concepts of the ministry—not the least of which is that heroic circuit rider emblazoned as symbol of the Publishing House. Indeed, much of nineteenth-century Methodism may be understood in terms of romanticism—whether in the primitivist form of the forest camp meeting or in the idealist form of the dedicated man of God preaching like an apostle. Again, many of the forces affected Protestantism generally. One may discern the Methodist minister in all categories of the typology of the American ministry devised by Robert Michaelson in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*.³ But our concern must be those factors most significant in the forging of *Methodist* ministry.

My theme in this paper gathers around a small cluster of theses, which may be stated as follows. The Methodist ministry came into being on the field in response to deeply felt needs. This helps to explain why Methodism has always possessed not one ministry, but two. They may be described as ordained and lay, or, in a more specifically American context, as traveling and local. This is not to ignore the important distinction to be made in the context of early Methodism between the priestly and the prophetic functions of the minister, most clearly seen in Wesley's England. But this theme, which involves the whole doctrine of the church, escapes our bounds. Not all traveling ministers have been ordained, nor have all local ministers been laymen. But the distinction between two ministries, the one derived from

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the Great Commission and the other from the priesthood of all believers, has always been clear. In the first place, then, my thesis is that the amazing success of the circuit rider would have been quite impossible without the unpublicized help of the local preacher, exhorter, and class leader. My second thesis is that, in the course of nineteenth-century American history, the traveling ministry became localized, and as a result the local ministry became—or seemed to become—superfluous. In a very real sense the missionary assumed the role of a truly traveling minister with a world mission. In this process two major sociological factors were at work, the westward movement of the frontier and the urbanization of society. The first of these tended to foster the itineracy, the second to destroy it. The major burden of this paper will be the exemplification of these forces. A large part of the history of theological education is tied inextricably to their interplay.

My third thesis is that the yeast of American democracy has been at work alongside these others in such a way as to bring the original double ministry into focus again from a new angle. The democratization of The Methodist Church carries immense implications for the ministry of the laity, a universal witness along with the special witness authorized through ordination. And this double ministry of course carries equally significant implications for the concept of the church as a community of ministers, after the fashion of Acts 8, where "they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles," and "those who were scattered went about preaching the word."

II

A major part of the history of Methodism in America in the nineteenth century before the Civil War is the history of growth and expansion westward. Although Timothy Smith has effectively shown that revivalistic fervor was powerful in the cities as well as in the rural West,⁴ the westward movement constitutes a dominant influence. Methodism came into being as an organization with a membership of about 15,000 as the frontier was

moving across the Appalachian barrier. When the frontier crossed the Mississippi about 1830, there were over 476,000 members. When the Civil War began, there were about one and three-quarters millions in the two episcopal churches. The preponderance of this growth came in the vast watersheds of the Mississippi River. When the frontier broke into isolated islands in the Far West about 1890, there were over three and a half millions.

During this whole period Americans were mostly country folk. In 1790 only one in twenty lived in an urban area (community of 2,500 or more). In 1860 still only one in five lived in town. But about this same time the cities began to absorb about one half the increase in population, and the trend continued in favor of urban population from this time on, until by 1920 about half the people lived in town.⁵

It is not necessary to relate the story of the movement of Methodism along with the frontier. The amazing success of the connectional system needs no proof. The shock troops of the itineracy moved into the areas of combat commanded by presiding elders under the guidance of bishops possessed of Asburian authority. Rightly Abel Stevens argued, against the "republicans," that the true analogy of the connectional system was not American democracy but military discipline.⁶ The frontier produced a curious combination of rigid authoritarian discipline associated with a high degree of independent responsibility—authoritarianism tempered with individualism, obedience invested with freedom. Sent out under the sole authority of the bishop from annual conference, his not to reason why but only to accept obediently whatever appointment was his, always under the necessity of giving up that appointment in return for another at regular intervals—this same preacher enjoyed a degree of freedom in the accomplishment of his task almost unparalleled in the annals of the ministry. "Lost" for months in the wilderness, he sometimes was unable even to report to his annual conference. The only link was the uncertain and tenuous one through the presiding elder. This curious combination of discipline in the annual conference with freedom

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on the circuit has entered into the permanent fabric of the American Methodist ministry. Even freer we may add, parenthetically at this point, were the thousands of local preachers, who did not enjoy the privilege—nor bear the burden—of membership in annual conference.

Conceivably the connectional system is operative apart from the itinerant principle; but the reverse is inconceivable. The connection was needed to weld into tight bond the wandering prophets of the itineracy. In turning to the latter we should be clear on its dual form, consisting of circulation within circulation. The minister on circuit was always on the go; but also he moved from circuit to circuit. Almost unbelievably large regions were assigned. In 1800, for example, William Burke had a circuit in central Kentucky running about one hundred miles square. In 1803 Illinois was one circuit, and so in 1806 was Missouri. Tobias Gibson had the whole lower Mississippi valley.⁷ Jacob Young wrote in his autobiography that his first circuit required a journey of six weeks, extended five hundred miles, provided for fifty services of preaching, plus many class meetings and prayer meetings and family visitation—"and still I had much time to read and study."⁸ Districts were as astounding as circuits. Young's Ohio District in 1812 included Steubenville, New Lisbon, Canfield, Youngstown, Hubbardsville, Smithfield, Oil Creek (Pennsylvania), Hartford, Burton, Canton, New Philadelphia, Coshochton, Zanesville, Cambridge, Barnesville, St. Clairsville.⁹ Alfred Brunson's Erie Circuit in 1819 was four hundred miles around and specified forty-four preaching appointments in four weeks.¹⁰ In all these situations, and in most circuits of the eastern conferences, the prevailing atmosphere was agrarian, if not downright pioneer. The writings of all these men are full of the language and spirit of the land—forests, clearings, farms, crops, acreage, etc.

Not only did these itinerants trudge or ride horseback around their circuits, but, lest they fall into a rut of bad habits or develop a proprietary attitude to their own region, they were shifted from circuit to circuit. Asbury usually made out his appointments for a quarter at a time.¹¹ Rarely did a man re-

main longer than six months. It is true, as some later opponents of the itinerant system pointed out, that no disciplinary limit was placed on the duration of an appointment until the General Conference of 1804, when it was set at two years. But this argument cannot be used to suggest that prior to 1804 there was no time limit. It simply reveals that there was no need for one. Efforts were made from 1836 on to extend the time limit, for long without success, for it was thought to be "against the genius of Methodism to continue a preacher for many years in succession." The *Journal* of the General Conference of 1840 recorded the opinion of the Committee on Revisals that "the time has not yet arrived for such alteration of the *Discipline*."¹² The memorials had proposed extension to three years. The same proposal was defeated in the northern church in 1856.¹³ Not until 1864 in the North and 1866 in the South was the limit extended, in the one case to three, in the other to four years. These limits prevailed throughout the century, except for twelve years, 1888-1900, in the North, a five-year experimental rule. It was entirely removed in the North in 1900, and qualified in the South in 1918 by the authorization to the bishop to make appointments for longer periods if deemed necessary. Throughout the nineteenth century, however, preachers operated under time limits varying from two to five years in the North and two to four years in the South.

A study should be made of the effect of the salary structure on the devotion of ministers to the itinerant system. I suspect that there is a connection. At the outset, preachers received \$64 a year for their services—as a maximum. This was raised in 1800 to \$80, with provision for married men as follows: \$80 additional for a wife, \$16 additional for each child under seven, and \$24 for each child between seven and fourteen. Bishop Coke failed to win acceptance of his proposal for a rental allowance, although his concern for worn-out and retired ministers found response.¹⁴ Asbury, who took a sort of grim pleasure in testing the ability of the Holy Spirit to provide for his men when both people and conference failed, did not essay to settle their financial affairs in so generous a manner as to provide temp-

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tations to luxury or gluttony. Worst of all, in spite of prevailing poverty, this refusal to plan systematically was not necessary. Nathan Bangs was convinced

if suitable measures were pursued, that full amount of all demands might be collected every year, and thus the hearts of our hard working preachers and of their widows and orphans, who now receive only about one third of their allowance, would be made to rejoice.¹⁵

The year Asbury died, 1816, the allowance was raised to \$100, and later additional provision was made for dependents. Especially after the Great Schism of 1844 differences in payments among the various appointments appear, although these were only gradually fixed officially in the Minutes of the annual conferences.¹⁶ My guess is that the differences at first arose from the fixation of long-standing deficiencies. Determination of the salary—and such it now became—by the quarterly conference was specified in the *Discipline* of 1860. By this time the variations had become quite large. This differentiation appears to have developed about the same time men began to settle in stations, and undoubtedly had direct effect on pressure to extend the time limit. But it should be considered a symptom, not a basic cause.

In 1847 Abel Stevens published *An Essay on Church Polity* in which, among other things, he sought to justify the itinerant system.¹⁷ He admitted some difficulties, but argued that the advantages far outweighed them. The local church benefits, he said, from the variety of talents provided. Since men possess divers gifts of the Spirit, frequent exchange helps provide a broader ministry to all.

By an itinerant system such men are changed from position to position, arousing dull churches, breaking up new ground, invading and reclaiming ungodly neighborhoods. By the same system prudent men, with talents for instructing and edifying the converted masses, follow the former, gathering up and securing the fruits of their labors.

The plan is especially valuable on the frontier, with its sparse population, he said. "It is the missionary church." Small churches thrive, although by themselves they would perish. At

least a third of the churches, he reported, were dependent on the itinerant system for survival.

General conditions on the frontier are sufficiently familiar not to require documentation. Primitive is the word. And the itinerants could not escape this primitive culture. People lived in cabins, in dirt and squalor—so did they. Young tells of a man who came ten miles through the wilderness to ask him to preach in his house. When they arrived at nightfall, he saw a miserable hovel without floor and practically unfurnished, inhabited by a scrawny, tangle-haired, wild-eyed woman and several dirty urchins. There, on the floor, entertained by divers vermin, he spent the night.¹⁸ We need not turn to finicky European witnesses like Mrs. Trollope for evidence of barbarism. Physical primitivism was accompanied by moral and spiritual primitivism. Family life suffered under the social pressures of woman-hungry frontiersmen and in the hopeless squalor which made many women feel that a window glass, a mirror, shoes, or even milled flour would turn a wilderness cabin into a palace. People lived in ignorance—so did the preachers. As late as 1835 James Gilruth, who was rather better educated than some and capable enough to serve as presiding elder, could scrawl in his *Journal*:

What of the flipent preacher who attempts to feed christs flock with out the bible? he is a worthless man as a minister—study the bible—pray—go into the pulpit thus & god will give the necessary inspiration—Former Methodist preachers were Mighty in the scriptures—other studies are only to aid this one point the publick ministry of the word.¹⁹

Whatever the validity of his argument, the text reveals the educational limitations under which he labored.

People succumbed almost universally to drink—so did some of the preachers. By 1796 General Conference was forced to modify Wesley's rule to permit Methodists to sell liquor if accomplished without disorder. The General Conference of 1816 found it necessary to legislate that "No stationed or local preacher shall retail spiritous or malt liquors without forfeiting his

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ministerial standing." Some of the circuit riders inevitably fell into the universal habit, without any particular sense of sin. Drink came to occupy the last line of defense, the last bastion of sanity, in the unending war with the wilderness. In a world where no doctor was available to heal, no woman to nurse or love, no minister to call men from the dregs of sin, liquor could—for the moment—take the place of all these and offer in addition surcease from worry, discouragement, and fear. Is it any wonder that Jacob Young reported of a minister named Story,

He was a doctor of divinity, of fine talents, and great gift in prayer, but alas! he died a martyr to *peach brandy*.²⁰

Some of the preachers fought this demon, including James Axley, Peter Cartwright, and James B. Finley. Alfred Brunson happily reported that so many sinners were converted to Methodism during a successful revival at New Haven, Ohio, that the price of whisky fell from 50 to 25 cents a gallon.²¹

From the beginning difficulties and disadvantages were apparent in the itinerant system. Asbury, who would never compromise on this issue, knew how difficult it was to find preachers for the circuits. "I am shocked to see how lightly the preachers esteem, and how readily they leave, the traveling plan. O Lord, by whom shall Jacob arise?"²² One of the greatest problems was that of marriage. Wesley faced that same problem in England: Peter Jacob would willingly ride, but how? "Can you help us to a horse that will carry him and his wife? What a pity we could not procure a camel or an elephant!"²³ And Asbury was acutely aware of the peril of matrimony to his plan. Repeatedly he reports in his *Journal* the difficulties in stationing the married preachers and the losses through their location. He cited his own example as justification of the celibate life—as did Paul.²⁴ Benjamin Lakin reveals the poignant distress that afflicted many married itinerants: "Sometimes I almost wished I had not took the appointment . . . it is painfull to leave an affectionate wife and go out into the world and travel up and down."²⁵ Only with the greatest difficulty was Brunson able to convince his

presiding elder that, even though he was married and had three children, he still could serve a circuit.²⁶ As if to test him he was thereupon given a hard circuit way out in the sticks.

There were other disadvantages. Single itinerants developed the habit of appearing for the first time on their appointed circuits immediately prior to the first quarterly conference and departing immediately after the fourth.²⁷ Married preachers who could live on the circuit stayed through. The Committee on Itineracy complained to the General Conference of 1824 that, although preaching and classes went forward, discipline, pastoral duties, and instruction of children were neglected.²⁸ Some in the southern church at its founding, as reported in the General Conference of 1846, were afraid lest the continued division of circuits into smaller ones and into stations would hinder the work.²⁹ Others, especially in the North, were of the opinion that itinerant preaching was unsuited to city work. But Abel Stevens argued against this.³⁰ On unusual appointments, such as Indian missions, continual change under difficult circumstances was a severe burden. John Pitezel pointed out that change of appointments in late autumn meant a hard and dangerous journey in the Sault Ste. Marie and Lake Superior area.³¹

I should like to raise a question about one weakness sometimes charged against the itineracy, that, while the minister as preacher is much in evidence, the minister as pastor is neglected. I am not so sure. It might rather be argued that the opposite is true, at least for the early period. The itinerant may or may not have preached great sermons—frontier conditions would argue against it. But he was always with the people. After riding fifteen or twenty miles or walking five—sometimes with company—he stopped off at some cabin or house, gathered the people in small groups, and preached. Before and after, and at night, he was with the people, in class or in their families. Jacob Young said that, when he went as presiding elder to Mississippi, he spent the first two weeks visiting from house to house, getting to know the people.³² The itinerants all recognized that, if they were to minister to the people of their circuits

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properly, they must know them and their problems. Nathan Bangs, when in Canadian work, would stop at each home along his way and say he had come to talk about religion. Only one person ever refused him admittance.³³ James Gilruth's journal is filled with instances of pastoral work.³⁴ This situation would prevail, of course, only so long as the environment was frontier or rural. Bangs recognized this when he wrote, addressing his preachers in New York Conference:

You might as well go home and go to sleep, as to preach in the manner you do, so far as building up Methodism is concerned. You may indeed be instrumental in the awakening and conversion of sinners; but while you preach once in two weeks in a place on week-days and Sabbaths, and are absent from your appointments all the rest of your time, though sinners may be awakened, yet, during your absence, other denominations, who have their stated ministrations every Sabbath, and whose ministers are constantly among the people, will gather the principal part of them into their churches, and thus you lose all your labour, so far as the Methodist Episcopal Church is concerned.³⁵

The denominational concept of the ministry is apparent.

One of the most serious impediments occasioned by frontier life was the barbarization of the gospel. It would not be true to say that the ministers abandoned the theological tradition of Wesley, for his sermons, Fletcher's and Watson's works continued in use for a long time. The men were constantly under the necessity of refuting the claims of the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and later the Disciples. Nevertheless, theological interpretation suffered most on the frontier. Benjamin Lakin witnessed the decline in the emphasis on sanctification, as ministers found themselves involved in a death struggle with ignorance and crass materialism.³⁶ John Peters in a recent study has shown how the finer and higher aspects of faith were lost. "The average frontier Methodist circuit rider was by inclination and ability a far better midwife than governess."³⁷ When one could scarcely induce souls to "flee the wrath," it was no time to "go on to perfection." Not until the 1840's did a revival centering on Christian perfection get under way.

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Abel Stevens, in his powerful argument in defense of itineracy, inadvertently gave away one of the chief reasons for its ultimate decline. Writing in 1847 he said that long circuits of four- to eight-weeks duration were no longer necessary. Four or five points gathered within five or ten miles would be quite practical.

They may be all within a circle of some five or ten miles radius, and thus have little or no necessity for horses, but give healthful walks, and a much more comfortable support to the preachers, and relief from insupportable pressure to the feeble appointments.³⁸

One contemplates with interest what the automobile has done to Stevens' ideal circuit!

It seems clear that, until about the end of the Civil War, frontier conditions favored the itinerant system, in spite of the natural difficulties. But we should not forget that, until 1784, there was not a single ordained minister in all American Methodism. For all the efficiency and devotion of the itinerants in the nineteenth century, they might still have failed but for the underlying support of a numerous and active local, mainly lay, ministry. One of the theses of this paper is that the service of the local ministry was well-nigh indispensable to the effectiveness of the traveling ministry. That is to say, without the connectional system on the one hand and the local ministry on the other, the far-famed circuit rider and his whole itinerant system might well have withered on the vine. This means also that we dare not ignore the local preacher in any discussion of the Methodist ministry.

In 1784, when eighty-three itinerants were effective, there were, according to Wade Barclay, several hundred local preachers.³⁹ Bishop McKendree, addressing the General Conference of 1812, said there were then about 700 traveling and about 2,000 local preachers.⁴⁰ By 1840, when figures on local ministers become available in the Minutes, there were 3,413 itinerants and 6,339 locals. The number of local ministers continued to run about double that of traveling ministers throughout the century. The ministerial members of conference, although appreciative of the services rendered by the local brethren, held them at a

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distance in the organization. Asbury was of the opinion that, if they wanted a seat in conference, they should enter the itineracy.⁴¹ The General Conference of 1796 set up the provisions for admission and supervision of local preachers, through recommendation by a society, licensing by the quarterly conference after examination, possible ordination as local deacon after four years, and trial and appeal in case of charges. Not until 1812 was it possible for a deacon of four years' standing to obtain elder's orders upon recommendation of two thirds of the quarterly conference and approval by the annual conference. Attempts by local preachers to gain representation in annual and general conferences failed. We read that at the annual conference in Cincinnati in 1819, the local preachers gathered outside the doors of conference and called themselves the "lower house."⁴² An unsuccessful and short-lived experiment was the "district conference," composed of local preachers, tried in 1820.⁴³

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the work of the local preachers in the period before the Civil War. Time and again we learn that the circuit rider, bravely leading the way into uncharted wilderness to carve out a new circuit, arrived to discover that a local preacher had already been there and organized a class. In fact, likely as not, the itinerant found much-needed food, lodging, and companionship in the cabin of a local preacher. James Haw rode into Kentucky in 1786 and found Francis Clark, a local preacher, already there with a class. John Kobler found that Francis McCormick had preceded him by three years.⁴⁴ Two Irish local preachers in the Erie Conference at the end of the eighteenth century appointed Robert R. Roberts, later bishop, a class leader.⁴⁵ Jacob Young gives several instances of prior work or initial help from local ministers. One of these was a colored man named Jacob. "Although he could not read a word, he could preach a pretty good sermon."⁴⁶ The new circuit in Huron County, Ohio, to which Brunson was appointed early in the century, had been "scented out" by a local preacher.⁴⁷ A pamphlet on "The Place of the Local Preacher in Methodism," printed from a speech in mid-century in South Carolina, pointed out that, where Methodism

was strong between Marlboro and Marion, local preachers had been active from the start; but that, where Methodism was weak between Barnwell and Parksville, there was no record of local preachers. An anonymous centennial address before the Local Preachers' Association in John Street Church in New York, 1866, stated

. . . it cannot be doubted that in almost every instance, they have gone before the regular ministry, carrying the Gospel, where the others were not able, or prepared to carry it; taking up appointments in the sparsely settled parts of the country and maintaining them, until they could be taken into the regular work by the travelling preachers.⁴⁸

It is curious that, while these men have been left behind in American Methodism, they have continued to play an active role in British Methodism.

Another side is not so happy. This has to do with the location of traveling ministers. Bishop Coke, far more than Asbury, was concerned over the short period in which itinerants remained effective. He lamented that so many married preachers were forced to locate.

I am conscious it is not the fault of the people; it is the fault of the preachers, who, through a false and most unfortunate delicacy, have not pressed the important subject as they ought upon the consciences of the people. I am truly astonished that the work has risen to its present height on this continent, when so much of the spirit of prophecy . . . should thus miserably be thrown away.⁴⁹

A study of the years 1792 to 1796 reveals that 161 men were received into the itineracy, but there was a net gain of only 27. Deaths and expulsions, together with 106 locations, account for the difference.⁵⁰ William Watters re-entered the itineracy in 1801 at the age of fifty, after locating for eighteen years. He located again in 1806, died in 1833 at the age of eighty-two.⁵¹ Bangs gives statistics in an Appendix to his *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* which show that, of 1,616 men received during thirty years, 821 located.⁵²

These men were not, of course, lost to the church. Many of

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them did yeoman service, with their experience and their locally valid orders. Some became famous citizens in other occupations. Thomas Scott located when he married in 1796, but he continued active preaching. He became prosecuting attorney in Ohio, later a judge, and finally chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court. One of the most famous local preachers was Edward Tiffin, first governor of the state of Ohio. Ordained deacon by Asbury, he remained in the local ministry because of his family. Busy in public life as member of the constitutional convention, as governor, and as United States senator, he still found time to do regular preaching, and his house was an oasis of hospitality for weary itinerants accustomed to the sparse fare of wilderness cabins. Brunson tells of Shadrach Bostwick, a local preacher and physician, who knew English literature, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and German.⁵³

For some years before the Civil War it was apparent that local preachers were in trouble. It seemed as if increasingly the so-called itinerants were settling down in the same communities, with the result that the local preachers had nothing to do, except in duplication of or in competition with the regular ministers. This worried the Committee on Itineracy of the southern church in 1850.⁵⁴ The situation was to become much more worrisome after the Civil War.

III

Methodists—and Protestants generally—were in a vague quandary in the years following the Schism of 1844. This is well illustrated by two actions taken by two successive General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1848 and 1852. The first of these urged annual conferences to discourage ministers from concentrating their work in towns and cities and neglecting the countryside.⁵⁵ The second urged ministers not to neglect “the myriads of emigrants who are constantly crowding to our country.”⁵⁶ Many Methodists feared that the cities would swallow up the itinerant and destroy the system. And yet here in the burgeoning cities were more and more of the people.

Two in ten lived in urban communities in 1860; one in two lived there in 1920. By the middle of the twentieth century two in five lived in cities of over 25,000 people and two more lived within twenty-five miles. One in eight, in fact, lived in the five largest cities. During the second part of the nineteenth century the Methodist population went up from 1,751,652 in 1860 to 4,411,572 in 1900, including both episcopal groups.

These people had to live through a succession of violent economic upheavals accompanied by financial panics and labor problems. They witnessed, and participated in, a general rise in the standard of living. The last quarter of the nineteenth century brought a veritable revolution to the American way of life. And it was not a peaceful revolution. The crash of '73, the railroad labor war of 1877, the desperate struggle of Clarence Powderly and the Knights of Labor in 1886, the Carnegie Steel and Pullman strikes of the early nineties—all these symptoms brought dislocation and near chaos to traditional customs and mores—including religion. One can pinpoint the situation by reference to the amazing Gas Boom of 1888-93 in North Indiana Conference, which resulted in many new and garishly gas-lighted churches, inflated salaries for ministers, and a rash of heady though temporary prosperity for churchmen.⁵⁷ Into all this weighty study we dare not enter.⁵⁸ Nor can we go into the large area of social Christianity, associated with such names as Josiah Strong, Jacob Riis, Washington Gladden, and Walter Rauschenbusch. Obviously these forces affected the ministers of all denominations either positively or negatively; and just as obviously they go beyond the sphere of this paper. The main point is that American religion came to be centered more and more in the cities. And, as Timothy Smith has shown, this goes for revivalism as well. For all its western growth, Methodism was still in 1865 heavily represented in the East. Here the urban impact was earliest and strongest. This was true in a large degree of southern Methodism, as recurrent warnings against modern worldly (i. e., urban) concerns in General Conference *Journals* illustrate.⁵⁹ Until 1880 Methodism in the South was relatively stronger in smaller cities; after 1880 it began

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to grow faster in larger cities.⁶⁰

In both North and South the pressures against maintenance of the older agrarian-based system came from the newly important cities. Abel Stevens, writing in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* in 1860, complained that the main drive to extend the time limit came from the cities of the East.⁶¹ When the General Conference of 1880 reported a shortage of ministers in the West and a superabundance in the East,⁶² it probably reflected two facts: (1) great expansion of Methodism westward, and (2) reluctance of ministers to move in that direction. From the cities also came pressures to enhance the prestige of Methodism in fine large churches. Old-timer Stevens regarded this as a danger: Methodism has always ministered to the poor. "Cheap chapels, thrown up among the neglected suburban population [i. e., working people] should be the rule not the exception with us."⁶³ His warning seems to have carried the weight of truth. The Episcopal Address of 1888 asked Methodists, concerning the urban masses: "Are they drifting away from us? Have we lost our love for them, or the aggressive spirit which carries the Gospel to their homes and hearts?"⁶⁴ These warnings and questions led to the rediscovery of an old social passion among many ministers, who sought to serve in city missionary work, etc. The whole area of the social gospel as such, however, we have excluded from this discussion.

Implications of all these changes may be seen in the image and structure of the ministry itself. One embarrassing and irritating effect was the growing tendency of strong city churches to "call" their ministers, always of course with the "consent" of the bishop. Elijah Hedding in his essay on the "Administration of Discipline" appended to the *Discipline* of 1842 said:

The difficulties attending this duty are increasing every year; and unless there be an abatement of the claims of some, both of the preachers and people, for certain places and certain men, it is impossible to see how the itinerant system can be long maintained in some parts of the country.⁶⁵

The southern bishops in the General Conference of 1858, re-

garding the weakening of the itineracy as the greatest danger confronting the church, frankly stated that "personal and local influences" were interfering with the system of episcopal appointments.⁶⁶ The same complaint came from the bishops in the North in 1860.⁶⁷

If this practice is to prevail, we shall have all the disadvantages of a settled ministry without its advantages—the embarrassments of two systems and the full benefits of neither.

More than one General Conference specifically denounced the practice of congregational negotiation. The whole thing came to a head in the General Conference of 1912, where the bishops said, "Congregational episcopacy is unthinkable."⁶⁸

That blunt layman who said "the preacher is our hired man and must do as we tell him," was brutally businesslike; but, to be candid, he was only giving the thumbscrew of commercial logic an extra turn. . .

if the preacher was "hired" by the congregation.

All this would suggest that the itineracy was undergoing some rather vigorous testing and trying. A large literature on the itinerant system, apart from discussion in General Conferences, appeared in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Some of this appeared in the form of ephemeral pamphlets of limited duration and soon forgotten. Some came as formal pontifications by influential bishops. It would be impossible adequately to cover all the literature. Perhaps a short survey and summary of opposing points of view may help bring the controversy into focus.

Shortly after the Civil War someone who chose to publish under the name of Nathan Plainspeke wrote a pamphlet entitled "Itineracy on Paper and Itineracy in Fact."⁶⁹ He favored the system, but recommended adaptation to new conditions.

The itineracy is a human invention. As such it is from its very nature constantly in need of repair and renovation, as such is capable of unlimited improvement, as such must be adapted to new conditions as fast as they arise.

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W. H. Pearne went further in his "Sober Thoughts for Thinking Men," written in the 1880's.⁷⁰ The times, he said, call for an end to the time limit. Neither ministers nor churches are willing to submit to this limitation, and both would benefit from its abolition, he thought. A series of articles by leading churchmen appeared in *The Independent*, and were reprinted in pamphlet form in 1880.⁷¹ Various points of view were presented, but the net effect was to favor either extension or abolition of the time limit. The articles reveal a tremendous pressure for revision. "A Southern View" in the series, by Thomas Summers, indicated preference for extension. Another writer argued that, now that we have cities, good communication, and less movement of population, we need an army of occupation-settled pastors. Most pointed was the article by H. K. Carroll, who emphasized the effect of urbanization. "Is there a necessity for a modification of the itineracy? We might answer the question by asking another: Is it necessary for us to succeed in the cities?" He advocated the "Brooklyn Plan," which would permit the bishop to reappoint indefinitely one third of the members of an annual conference, moving the rest under the time limit.

The results of this agitation were not slow in appearing. In the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century the time limit, and with it the conception of a truly itinerant ministry, was abolished. Even under the old two-year limit many ministers were serving long terms in special appointments. In the Episcopal Address of 1840 the bishops remarked that about seventy traveling preachers were teaching in colleges without changing posts. They were in a situation of "virtual location." In 1860 the northern bishops thought men who teach should not be members of annual conferences. By 1880 special appointments involved some three hundred ministers. "Why should an editor," asked C. N. Sims in one of the articles noted above, "be allowed to write his sermons to the same congregation for twelve years, and a pastor be permitted to preach his but for three?" The four-year limit in the South provided enough leeway; but in 1888 the three-year limit in the North gave way to a five-year limit, which proved unsatisfactory to all concerned. One unexpected

result was that churches, which had been willing to suffer an unpopular minister for three years, under the five-year limit besieged the bishop for a change in one year. The bishops recognized the problems in 1900, and recommended, on the basis of twelve years' experimentation with the five-year rule, that General Conference either return to the three-year rule or abolish the limit altogether.⁷² The latter course was followed. The southern church had voted this same action back in 1866, but reconsidered and settled for the four-year limit—a triumph for the one-man crusade of Bishop Lovick Pierce.⁷³ This rule prevailed well into the twentieth century, but then was modified to permit longer appointments under recommendation of the presiding elders.

At the northern General Conference of 1912 the bishops took a long and uneasy look at the changes of the recent past. They were worried about the abolition of the time limit and irritated by the spirit of congregationalism. They cherished the great Methodist principle of the itineracy.

Whatever befalls our Methodism, this will ever remain a glorious tradition—that as the eagle by the life within itself grows the wings that bear it undaunted through sunshine or storm wherever its vision leads, so once the eagle souls of men grew wings that bore them as flying evangelists in quest of souls, abandoning themselves to God as utterly as the eagle abandons itself to the air. For the more effectual functioning of the God-life in their souls the fathers *grew* the itinerancy. Let no sons of theirs declare their type outgrown by the Church they created. It is far more likely that the wings of the fathers are too large for their sons. If we still aspire to be eagles, let us beware of imitation wings. The best substitute for life-grown wings that men have yet devised has by its uncertain mechanical heartbeat dropped many an adventurer to his death. For the typical itinerant, consecration meant a whole offering on the altar. His test was God's answer by fire. Then he was ready to "die daily" or on the instant. That was the beginning of our heroic age.⁷⁴

This is American Methodist primitivism: Our Golden Age, when Titans roamed the Methodist Paradise, was the Age of the Circuit Rider. In those days preachers went forth to do battle, under

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discipline and obedience. As the Address put it, "A militant company compactly organized will win a dozen victories while a town meeting is wrangling about the choice of a leader." If one did not know better, one might suspect that Lenin had stolen the secret of Methodism. In anticipation of objections the bishops then stated that Methodism is really "the freest spiritual democracy on earth." Although we may be tempted to smile at this romanticization, we should salute the elements of tragedy. In many ways this Address brought into the open the conflicts and tensions that had already transformed the Methodist ministry beyond recall. This was the swan song of the old itineracy, and no yearning could bring it back. Two more years and the world was plunged into the first world war. That was the year Bishop Thomas B. Neely, one of the conservatives, brought out his book, *The Minister in the Itinerant System*, designed to describe and conserve the old ways.⁷⁵ To his way of thinking there is no such thing as a "call" by a church in Methodism. He blamed the trouble on a few influential laymen in a few large city churches. He had no understanding of the powerful forces at work in American life, and had nothing to offer except this retreat to the keep. He would have been on stronger ground to have pointed out that, even after the urbanizing trends of the twentieth century, about two thirds of our churches have less than five hundred members and one half less than three hundred.

The net result, in terms of one of our original theses, was the location of the traveling ministry, both in terms of the rise of stations as against circuits and in terms of longer pastorates. The change was probably necessary, to fit the changing times, for, after all, the itineracy was a human invention. But something of the light of the Wesleyan tradition was extinguished, for out with the itineracy went the fundamental concept of a world parish, an unlimited ministry called to publish the glad tidings in the great unknown. Location could too easily mean stagnation. That is why I suggest that the missionary has inherited one of the central features of the Methodist ministry.

Another result was the obsolescence of the local ministry. To

be sure, the numbers of local preachers remained at a high level; but the proportion as over against traveling ministers decreased. In 1860 there were 13,541 local and 8,778 traveling preachers in the two episcopal Methodisms. In 1900 the figures were 19,277 and 18,386. By 1930 there were more traveling than local ministers, and the total number of the latter was beginning to decline. Far more significant, however, was the fact that the whole institution of the local ministry became more and more of a useless appendix. Abel Stevens back in 1847 worried about this. The division of circuits into stations would, he feared, "annihilate" the local preachers.⁷⁶ And so it did. When the itinerant came to live in the parsonage attached to the station, what should the local preacher do? Formerly he had filled in when the circuit rider was on circuit. As likely as not, he preached at the Sunday service more frequently than the appointed minister did. He also found ample opportunity to reach out in the rural neighborhood to settlements nearby, where preaching might be held occasionally. Now, increasingly, the action took place in an urban environment. The General Conference of 1884 turned down a request for more support for evangelistic work by local preachers in cities.⁷⁷ By 1892 the bishops feared that "we have lost the art of utilizing our local ministry."⁷⁸ Urbanization provided the debilitating influence and modern transportation administered the *coup de grace*. The local preacher became a pathetic figure, neither fish nor fowl, neither layman nor minister, called but not sent, willing but not able. His own traveling minister had taken his place. And much the same thing could be said of the tribes of exhorters and class leaders. The day had arrived when the people could sit back and say, "Let the preacher do it." A body blow had been dealt to one of the central doctrines of Protestant Christianity, of which Methodism from the beginning had been a special custodian—the priesthood of the laity.

One of the most important results for the ministry of the tendencies we have been surveying was the development of theological education. This paper is not concerned to offer a history of Methodist theological education. Our purpose is

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simply to identify another facet of sociological influences at work on the ministry. From the beginning even the more uncouth circuit riders had sought diligently to study as opportunity offered. Jacob Young listed frequently his reading.⁸⁰ Brunson, whom no one would be inclined to describe as unduly intellectual, told in his autobiography how he educated himself.⁸⁰ He reviewed grammar while riding to appointments. He spent time with friends parsing sentences. In one year he read about twenty-five books of history and theology. In winter he had to read in crowded, noisy cabins. In summer he gladly escaped into the woods—the famous “Brush College.” It is noteworthy that he pays particular tribute to his “professor” in this college, Shadrach Bostwick, one of the ubiquitous local preachers. Gilruth’s journal is peppered with references to broad reading. Barclay gives further illustrations.⁸¹ Farther west and later Orceneth Fisher reported:

Of course I have not enjoyed those facilities for acquiring literature that those who have remained among the Colleges and Libraries have enjoyed. Still I have made some acquaintances with the Hebrew and Greek Languages, and have written and published several works. . . .⁸²

In general they were familiar with the Bible, the *Discipline*, Wesley’s sermons, and Fletcher’s *Appeal*—a worse selection could be made! The very first *Discipline*, of 1785, required five hours of study daily, in theory at least. The more practical aspects were taught under a tutorial system whereby young men were “apprenticed” to older men. In this work the presiding elders were key figures. But the real beginnings of theological education are to be discerned in the rise of the Conference Course of Study, at first, from 1816, on a desultory annual conference basis, and after 1844 under general authority of the bishops. Opposition to any more formal process of ministerial training, however, continued strong for a surprisingly long time—until, in fact, change was forced by the spread of general education and finally urbanization. In 1867 B. H. Nadal argued in the eminently intellectual *Methodist Quarterly Review*:

FREDERICK A. NORWOOD

If a rude young man is converted and burns to preach, before he does it you would take him out of his original element, and break the powerful tie which bound him to his fellows. Our view is, that the masses need such men, substantially in the rough, whose sturdy sense shall gather practical Christian lore as their labors proceed, and who shall never know that they have a profession.⁸³

This was the attitude of Bishop Pierce in the South, defender of the old ways against progressive young men like McTyeire. But at least one such rude young man rued the day he followed this advice. Jacob Young regretted that he had been enticed away from Prindle's Academy by his presiding elder. Now, an old man and wiser, he said:

I advise all Methodist preachers, presiding elders, and bishops, when they find a young man thirsting for knowledge, that they let him pursue his own course, and encourage him in it.⁸⁴

A powerful force ultimately strengthening theological education was let loose when the General Conference of 1820 recommended to the annual conferences the founding of colleges. By an inexorable process the education of Methodists forced the education of ministers. The ambivalent attitude of the middle years is well illustrated by a report to the General Conference of 1848: At the same time it recommended that ministerial candidates ought to attend college, it warned that intellectual improvement should not be allowed to get in the way of "preaching of the cross."⁸⁵ Repeatedly, in both North and South, warnings were issued that an educated laity would demand an educated ministry.⁸⁶ Brunson saw the basic cause in the change from circuit to station, which led people to demand the "tinsel" which seminaries could provide.⁸⁷

The prime issue centered on the establishment of theological seminaries—or biblical institutes, a name of some traditional standing among Methodists. It is curious to observe that one of the main grounds for opposition was nothing other than the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This is clear—to us if not to them—in the Episcopal Address of 1840:

When the history, doctrines, evidences, and duties of the revelation

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of God shall form a distinct and primary department of study in our institutions of learning—our children be dedicated to God, and trained up in his knowledge and fear, and the whole church united in devout and fervent prayer that God would raise up, and send forth into his vineyard, men of his own selection, and scriptural proofs, required of those who profess to be called to preach the gospel, it is believed that human agency will have reached its legitimate bounds in the premises, and that this great concern will be perfectly secure with the Supreme Head of the church, to whom alone belongs the authority to perpetuate the ministry of his gospel to the end of the world.⁸⁸

If this argument stands in the truth, brethren, we are living witnesses to the fall of this prime Protestant doctrine and the introduction of a ministry foreign to the spirit of the Reformation! I leave that one to your tender mercies. With the appearance of seminaries, more and more Methodists seem to have thought otherwise.

IV

The democratic atmosphere of American history has had at least two influences on American Methodism, although neither can be claimed as a complete or sufficient cause. One result has been the progressive laicization of the church. The other is found in the third thesis with which this paper began: The democratization of The Methodist Church carries immense implications for the ministry of the laity—or rather the laity as a ministry—and hence for the concept of the church as a community of ministers. It is not suggested here that the ground for any doctrine of the church or ministry is to be sought in secular factors; rather the ground is to be defined in theological terms rooted in Scriptures. We are closer to 1 Peter 2:9 than to the Declaration of Independence. As so frequently is the case, here sociological and theological factors seem to have worked in intertwined relations, each bearing on the other.

Our theme in this final section is especially relevant, not only to the Methodist ministry, but also to current ecumenical discussions, in which many churches of European background have newly discovered the laity as something more than a passive

receptacle into which faith is poured. Most directly pertinent is the new book by Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*,⁸⁹ which summarizes much of the current thought and presents a well-considered broad base for the *diakonia* of all Christians. After reference to various experiments such as the familiar Kirchentag in Germany, Männerdorf in Switzerland, Kerk en Wereld in Holland, Iona in Scotland, and Sigtuna in Sweden, the author refers to the new Department of the Laity within the World Council of Churches as evidence of the ecumenical dimensions. His argument is that the universal ministry of believers has ramifications bearing on the Christian faith far beyond the mere utilization of the laity. Much of what he says has found valid expression in the formulation of the American Methodist ministry in the broadest sense, as wrought in the crucible of necessitous experience.

The first influence, laicization, is seen throughout in such movements as the revolt of James O'Kelly, the Methodist Protestant schism, the drive for lay representation, the rise of the board of trustees over the board of stewards, the introduction of the businessman's and financier's mentality, and, ultimately, the secularization of the church. These negative aspects need not detain us long, for they are a familiar part of American Protestantism in modern times, in such variegated forms as Sunday school alliances, Christian associations, women's work and youth work, and the Men and Religion Forward Movement just prior to World War I. It would be unjust to criticize these movements, which have done much for the churches and even for the faith. But it must be recognized that they all failed to grasp the full implications of the essential identity of *laos* and *kleros*. The church was still an institution to be promoted, not a community of ministers.

The spirit of democracy ran full depth in the career of James O'Kelly. He could not bring himself to submit to the military regime over which Francis Asbury presided. One does not grasp the profundity of devotion to freedom until he has read O'Kelly's *The Author's Apology for Protesting Against the Methodist Episcopal Government*.⁹⁰ The motto of this little

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work, published privately in 1798, is: "If Christians are free citizens of Zion, they should prize those liberties, seeing they were purchased with the precious blood of Christ." When Asbury complained of the difficulty of governing the Virginians, O'Kelly told him the reason: "our invariable determination to stand fast in our civil and religious liberties 'wherein God hath strangely made us free.'"⁹¹ It is not surprising that he defended vigorously the rights of the local preachers against the claims of the traveling preachers. In his scriptural arguments on primitive equality of traveling and local ministers he comes close to the concept of the universal priesthood. Some of the same considerations lay behind the debates over election of presiding elders and lay representation that led, among other things, to the separation of the Methodist Protestants in 1830. It is a pity that both these movements should so soon have fallen into sectarianism and thereby have choked off the powerful forces resulting from the marriage of sacramental community—the priesthood of believers—with political community—the sovereignty of the people.

Fortunately, the waves of democratic influence in Methodism were not limited to schismatic movements. This church has never lacked a supply of nonconformists who chafed under tendencies toward authoritarianism. James Gilruth commented on a conversation with Bishop Soule and David Young as follows: "O how Monarkal their views!"⁹² The long agitation for lay representation goes, I think, much deeper than most of us realize, far deeper than an expression of the secular American principle of representation for those governed. The tragedy is that, when it was finally achieved, neither ministers nor laymen knew what to do with it. The results, which should have made ministers of laymen, rather simply led ministers into the Kiwanis Club. I dare say The Methodist Church has as yet scarcely scratched the surface in plumbing the depths of meaning in what it is pleased to call "lay activities."

In terms of the ministry as such, however, prime emphasis should be placed on what Abel Stevens called the "auxiliary orders." We have already discussed the early importance and

subsequent decline of the local preachers. Stevens, writing in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* in 1873, exclaimed, "There has not been, since the apostolic age . . . a more striking example of the 'priesthood of the people' than this 'local ministry' of Methodism."⁵² Democracy in the ministry does not end here, however, for behind the local preachers stood another, almost forgotten, army of exhorters and class leaders. Nathan Bangs tied all the ministries together in his scholarly account of Methodism as *An Original Church of Christ*:

This method of propagating these doctrines and enforcing these rules, by an itinerant ministry, with all those auxiliaries afforded us by class leaders, stewards, exhorters, and local preachers, is admirably adapted to give a diffusive spread to the gospel of God our Saviour, and to build up the people in holy living."⁵³

Here was an exemplification, in Methodist terminology, of the concept of the ministry Kraemer professes to find in the Pauline affirmations in the fourth chapter of Ephesians: "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry. . . ." Following H. W. Robinson, he insists that no comma belongs after saints, that the two phrases, separated in the usual versions, really belong together so as to identify the saints with the ministry, the primitive *diakonia*.⁵⁵

Lest we through ignorance or neglect pass lightly over the now defunct office of exhorter, let it be solemnly said that nowhere in the Wesleyan tradition has the proclamation of the gospel approached closer to the norm of the pure apostolic *kerygma* than in a proper exhortation. I speak with some feeling at this point, since the only fellow minister to be discovered in my entire undistinguished family tree is a great uncle several generations removed, who was an exhorter in the little church in Kilbourne, Ohio.

And beside these stood the class leaders, of whom I have written elsewhere.⁵⁴ The Episcopal Address of 1860 called these the "sub-pastorate." And indeed, whatever else they may have been, they were under all the rest—"the lowest wheel but

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one," as Wesley succinctly characterized them. Scarcely anywhere else in Christian history can one find a more immediate, more dedicated, more responsible form of pastoral oversight. Although Edmund Schlink might be loath to admit it, the community of faith of which we have been speaking is not far from his succinct definition: *Die Kirche als das durch Christus aus der Welt herausgerufene Gottesvolk; die Kirche als das von Christus in die Welt hinausgesandte prophetisch-priesterlich-königliche Volk.*⁹⁷ This emphasis has found able recognition in contemporary Methodist thinking, particularly a paper on "The Methodist Understanding of the Church and Its Ministry" presented by Paul Schilling to the Glen Lake Conference on World Missions, and, for the class meeting, a paper presented by Franklin Littell to the American Society of Church History, December, 1958.

At the end we come back to the plain Methodist layman, who, as Abel Stevens clearly understood, was likewise called by the Holy Spirit to witness to the faith:

Each, as a member of the common priesthood, is to find out, by the light of the Spirit and the scrupulous consideration of his peculiar gifts or circumstances, in what particular way he is to discharge his part of the common service, the ministration and propagation of the common cause: some to preach; some to "exhort"; some to teach; some to lead in the social devotions of the society; some to provide pecuniary supplies by their talents in business; but all to serve with equal consecration, moved, aided, and consoled by the same divine Spirit, in the one universal priesthood.⁹⁸

From such ministers as these came the travelers who, freed from the limitations of a local pastorate, submitted voluntarily to a discipline excelled only by the Rule of the Society of Jesus, and went out in fulfillment of the Great Commission into all the world. Jacob Young was called to the ministry by Samuel Parker, class leader.⁹⁹ Alfred Brunson was called to the ministry by a class leader who had been converted in Ireland by John Wesley.¹⁰⁰ Matthew Simpson began his magnificent preaching career as class leader.¹⁰¹ Out of the *laos tou theou* arose men

especially called to receive the Great Commission for a world parish.

It matters not what happens to the itineracy. It matters not what happens to the time limit. These are all man-made inventions. What really matters is that Methodist ministers of our day recover the vision that has been ours from the beginning, accept the special call to a world parish without looking back, and understand, as Wesley wrote to Joseph Benson, "We are debtors to all the world."¹⁰²

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III

The Meaning of Ordination In Methodism

Franz Hildebrandt

THIS PAPER seems to fall between the various disciplines represented in our faculties and in our convocation program here: the historic, the systematic, the practical. That must be so in the nature of the case; but it also shows why the theology of the ministry in general and of ordination in particular has found no certain place as yet in our seminary curricula. If my impression is correct, there is a fatal gap somewhere quite close to the center of our theological training: from the survey of church history and the analysis of contemporary thought, our young men are plunged straight into the technicalities of ministerial practice. They learn, for instance, and this quite rightly, the art of how to hold a baby at baptism; I am not so sure that they always know the reason for the use of infant baptism in The Methodist Church, or indeed for the lifelong and daily administration of Word and Sacrament to which they are committed. From my own student days I recall the fourfold division of practical theology into homiletics, catechetics (religious education), liturgy and counseling which was always prefaced by, and supposedly based upon, an introductory chapter on *Kirche, Amt, Gemeinde*—church, ministry, parish. There is, I think, much to be said in favor of such a basic course; and a paper on ordination would certainly belong to this section of theology.

Where, then, do we begin? There is not very much official material on the Methodist doctrine of ordination; there is no theological definition in the *Discipline*. Our catechisms, such as they are (I speak of those published in the twentieth century), make no mention of the subject at all. The nearest thing to an

official statement would be Question 85 in "A Roman Catechism, faithfully drawn out of the allowed writings of the Church of Rome, with a reply thereto"—not written by Wesley, but incorporated in his Works—which reads as follows: "Is ordination a sacrament? It is truly and properly a sacrament, and doth confer grace; and who so denies this, is accursed (Concil. Trid., Sess. 7, Can. 1, 23. cap. 3, Can. 3). Reply: We account ordination to be of divine institution, and that by it a ministerial commission is conveyed; but how ever necessary this office is to the Church, and grace for the exercise of it, yet as grace is not promised to it, we cannot admit it to be properly and truly a sacrament."¹ This, of course, is agreed by common Protestant consent. It is presupposed in the Articles of Religion which, in Nr. 23, speak of the *rite vocatus*, the "lawfully called," who alone has the right to the office of public preaching and ministering the Sacraments in the congregation.² Wesley omits this article in his own abbreviated 25—not so much (here, as always) because of theological disagreement as because of a different practical emphasis: "I apprehend indeed that there ought, if possible, to be both an outward and inward call to this work; yet, if one of the two be supposed wanting, I had rather want the outward than the inward call. I rejoice that I am called to preach the Gospel both by God and man. Yet I acknowledge, I had rather have the divine without the human, than the human without the divine call."³ The moment came when he had to choose between the two; but before we come to that, it is important to point out that he shares the common platform of both English and Continental Reformers in his insistence upon the *rite vocatus*. "No administration without ordination"⁴ is John Bowmer's apt summary of the principles and practice of early Methodism; in fact, it is an almost verbatim quotation from Wesley himself.

And behold, a greater than Wesley is here. A Methodist doctrine of ordination must needs turn to the place to which he never failed to refer his readers: to the law and to the testimony. Our fathers in the nineteenth century knew this with a surer instinct than we can claim. Take, for example,

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the "Handbook of Scriptural Church Principles and of Wesleyan-Methodist Polity and History in two parts," by Benjamin Gregory (1888). He asks—the whole book is in catechetical form—"What are the scriptural requisites for the due appointment of Pastors?"; and he answers: "A striking and significant description of an ordination service to church rulership is given in Numbers 27:15ff. Here we have the essential elements of ministerial ordination: 1) The divine call to the office: 'let the Lord set a man over the congregation.' 2) The nature of the office: leadership is stewardship. 3) The grand primary qualification for the ministerial office: a man in whom is the Spirit. 4) The mode of induction to the office: the laying-on of hands before all the congregation, and the giving him a charge in their sight. 5) The correlative duty of the congregation, and the object of all this solemnity of appointment: 'That all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.'"⁵

There is no exact counterpart to this passage in the New Testament. I emphasize "exact," because the use of, and relation to, this precedent, especially by Luke in Acts 6:1 ff., is a complex and still controversial problem.⁶ What one can safely say is this: "It is certain that the ministry is based upon the will of the Lord; it is not certain that ordination by imposition of hands was administered to the apostles, retained as their prerogative, and transmitted by them to a chain of successors."⁷ New Testament ordination has its undoubted forerunner in Old Testament and late Jewish ordinations; but it is not simply identical with them.⁸ Analogy would seem to be the appropriate word here; and analogy, again—*analogia scripturae*—must be the operative word in the description of the Wesleyan use of the biblical material. Gregory's reference to Numbers 27:15ff. was, of course, not intended as a blueprint for the Methodist ordination ritual (though one could think of worse dangers); his concern is, as he puts it, with "the points to be guarded in Christian ordination."⁹ Wesley has the same thing in mind in his well-known basic distinction between his preference for episcopal government as "scriptural" and the notion that it is "prescribed in scripture."¹⁰ "Why is it that there is no determinate plan

of church government appointed in Scripture? Without doubt, because the wisdom of God had a regard to the necessary variety."¹¹

The freedom won at this point is not the freedom of one who runs away from scripture, but, on the contrary, of one who is at home in the Gospel and wants to stay within his Father's house. What else, after all, is Wesley's Methodism but a system of footnotes upon the sacred text? His whole doctrine of the ministry, for instance, could be stated in terms of his underlining of certain basic passages in the New Testament; and the Pastoral Epistles would, of course, occupy a central place in such an undertaking. We cannot attempt this here; in fact, my assignment is "only" ordination and not the ministry *in toto*, and again, ordination in Methodism, not in the New Testament. So a very few samples from a vast material must suffice.¹² On the first sentence in Romans—"Paul, called an apostle, separated to the gospel of God"—Wesley comments: "made an apostle by that calling. While God calls, He makes what He calls Separated: By God, not only from the bulk of other men, from other Jews, from other disciples, but even from other Christian teachers, to be a peculiar instrument of God in spreading the Gospel." In the Acts he notes with special interest (4:13) the "illiterate and uneducated men" that Peter and John were, and remarks: "Even by such men (though not by such only) hath God in all ages caused His Word to be preached before the world." Later, in the fourteenth chapter, "when they had ordained presbyters in every church," he observes that these were "out of those who were themselves but newly converted. So soon can God enable even a babe in Christ to build up others in the common faith" (14:23). Finally, on the occasion of Barnabas and Saul being "separated for the work to which I have called them" (13:2), the comment is this: "This was not ordaining them. St. Paul was ordained long before, and that not of men, neither by man. It was only inducting him to the province for which our Lord had appointed him from the beginning, and which was now revealed to the prophets and teachers. In consequence of this, they fasted, prayed, and laid their hands upon them: a rite

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which was used not in ordination only, but in blessing and on many other occasions."

The significance of this last passage is more far reaching than might appear at the first glance. Wesley is, of course, quite correct in his exegetical statement that the "separation" (*ἀφορίζειν*) of Barnabas and Saul is not ordination. On the other hand, he cannot fail to be aware that in his own day and practice ordination was indeed separation—separation, to be sure, from the mother Church of England. In this second sense the word is always coupled with ordination wherever it appears throughout Wesley's Works (just look at the Indices);¹³ and conference after conference debates the problem. He himself wrestles with it from very early days: "It is from a full conviction that we permit laymen, whom we believe God has called, to preach. . . . This we are clearly satisfied we may do. That we do more, we are not satisfied. It is not clear to us that Presbyters, so circumstanced as we are, may appoint or ordain others. . . . This is the very point wherein we desire advice; being afraid of leaning to our own understanding. It is undoubtedly needful, as you observe (to the Reverend Mr. Walker), to come to some resolution in this point; and the sooner the better. I therefore rejoice to hear that you think 'this matter may be better, and more inoffensively ordered; and that a method may be found which, conducted with prudence and patience will reduce the constitution of Methodism to due order, and render the Methodists, under God, more instrumental to the ends of practical religion.' This, Sir, is the very thing I want."¹⁴

What I have called the "second sense" of the word separation is only superficially technical, and must be seen as deriving from the theological and fundamental "first" sense in the New Testament—"Paul, separated unto the Gospel of God." Because ordination is essentially "setting apart," it cannot be helped—though Wesley would dearly have liked to help it—that ordination must lead Methodism into separation. Wesley's hand is forced not only by the need of the American situation to which we shall come presently, but by the conflict, already mentioned, between the call of men and the call of God. In other words,

not only the flock, but the ordinands themselves present the problem. "It is true," he says, "that, in ordinary cases, both an inward and an outward call are requisite. But we apprehend there is something far from ordinary in the present case. And upon the calmest view of things, we think, they who are only called of God and not of man, have more right to preach than they who are only called of man, and not of God. Now, that many of the Clergy, though called of man, are not called of God, to preach His Gospel, is undeniable, 1. Because they themselves utterly disclaim, nay, and ridicule, the inward call. 2. Because they do not know what the Gospel is, of consequence, they do not and cannot preach it. . . . This at present is my chief embarrassment. That I have not gone too far yet, I know; but whether I have gone far enough I am extremely doubtful. . . . Soul-damning clergymen lay me under more difficulties than soul-saving laymen!"¹⁵

We cannot go in any detail into the question of Wesley's ordinations which current ecumenical conversations have forced, or should have forced, upon the Methodist consciousness; and a great deal of thought, if not of material "digging" research, remains to be done in this field. But we can recognize in what has just been quoted the several tensions which complicate the situation—for him and for us. There is, first of all, the "ordinary" and the "extraordinary" case; and the dispensation of the Gospel committed to John Wesley was undoubtedly of the latter kind. The authority which toward the close of his life he exercised over the whole of England and beyond was, in Edgar Thompson's phrase, that of "Wesley, Apostolic Man."¹⁶ It was by this authority that he acted—still trying valiantly, and quite unsuccessfully, to square it with his canonical obedience to the Anglican Church—and this matters, both in spirit and in fact, probably quite as much as his formal argument, based on Lord King and Stillingfleet, that he was a scriptural *episcopos*. "I am now as firmly attached to the Church of England as I ever was since you knew me. But meantime I know myself to be as real a Christian Bishop as the Archbishop of Canterbury."¹⁷

Added to these tensions of ordinary and extraordinary, of

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Anglican and Apostolic, is the peculiar mixture of episcopalian and presbyterian factors. John Wesley, having learnt that the two terms are synonymous in the New Testament, proceeds to act accordingly. His brother Charles, upon receiving the news of the Bristol ordinations, retorts: "how have they for three score years said (J. W. was) . . . a Papist; and lo! he turns out at last a Presbyterian!"¹⁸ Rattenbury endorses this view when he calls John "a kind of High Church Presbyterian."¹⁹ Yet, as he himself has pointed out, and others, such as A. W. Harrison and Bowmer with him, this is only partly true; only in so far as Wesley believed that orders can be transmitted by presbyters.²⁰ But "his idea of succession was still, in effect, episcopal . . . he still maintained the need for episcopal oversight. He was therefore no Presbyterian in the full sense."²¹ The matter is further confused by Wesley's marked preference for "Superintendent" over against "Bishop" Asbury; this involves, so it seems to me, more than a choice between Latin and Greek. Raymond George has put his finger on the "dilemma" which Wesley "should have seen: either presbyters are Bishops, in which case Coke needed no ordination; or they are not—in which case, what right had he to ordain?" He then answers his own question thus: "He (Wesley) was a kind of Superintendent by no formal appointment, but in future Superintendents would be appointed by ordination. . . . He intended to establish a Church which would neither be presbyterian nor contain 'Bishops.' . . . The whole history of the subject both before and after 1784 suggests that he was in constant uncertainty, and the fact that he avoided the term 'Bishop' was in a sense stultified by his approval of a triple ordination." It is hard to disagree with these findings or, for that matter, with George's conclusion: "That Methodism is now a Church does not depend on the validity of what was done in 1784 or 1795 or 1835; on quite other grounds, we assert that Methodism is a Church, and being a Church, both can and does ordain."²²

To these other grounds we must now turn. But this does not mean a turn away from Wesley. As in our previous case, the *analogia scripturae* still holds, even though the New Testament

does not provide us with a blueprint for ordination practices and rituals; so neither the allowance for Wesley's extraordinary powers and circumstances, nor even the admission of confusion in detail gives us the right to dismiss him. Modern Methodism, as we shall see, is not altogether lacking in confusions of its own, and not purely in matters of detail; and to say that Wesley's genius, in ordaining or in evangelizing, was to hit upon the proper expedient is to learn just what is least important. There are theological principles at stake upon which he took his stand and about which he has to teach and certainly to question us—even if his own *ipse dixit* can never be our final answer. The need for ordination and the right to ordain we can, I hope, take for granted after what has been said so far. In what follows, our attention should be focused on the *purpose*, the *range*, the *form* and the *test* of ordination.

What is the *purpose* of ordination? It may be well for us to pause for a moment in order to weigh the importance of asking this as the primary question. For it really implies a reversal of the whole direction in which the present ecumenical debate tends to go. We are, on all sides, called to account for the "validity" of our orders, and consequently busy to establish the source from which they come. This, however, is not at all the angle from which the New Testament looks at the subject. It rather summons us to ask what our orders are for; in fact, if I read the evidence aright, the picture of the minister of the Gospel is not so much that of a man "in orders," but "under orders." In one of the rare places where a direct reference is made to the making of ministers—Acts 26:16ff.—we find the Lord's voice saying quite specifically: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness," and Paul responding: "wherefore I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." To stop for reflection about his ministerial status would have been unthinkable at that moment; it would have been an act of rank disobedience. In Galatians 1:15ff., Paul's own version of the story, this is made even more emphatic: "when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, to

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reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen: immediately I jumped at it (this is Luther's translation) and conferred not with flesh and blood." No time and no need for consultation with the council of apostles about his reception into full connection. No time and no need, later, in the Pastoral Epistles, for elaborate rules about the manner of ministerial appointments; but a great deal of space given to the pattern of the ministerial character, the kind of people that bishops and deacons ought to be.²² These texts were not lost on Wesley; he sees to it that his preachers are always, physically and spiritually, on the move; for he is, like the centurion, "a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (Matt. 8:9). All this, of course, is only a parable of the Master's own unquestioned authority, of His Word which is faithful and worthy of all acceptance; so that in the life of obedience to His charge the healing power of Jesus is made manifest.

If thus we are recalled to our priorities and directed to ask for the purpose for which we were ordained—that is, separated, called and sent forth—it follows that "no man, having put his hand on the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). And a number of trends in the modern Church are bound to come under the judgment against this "looking back." Wesley would have been quick to point them out to us. Is not, first of all, our habitual preoccupation with the status of the ministry suspiciously reminiscent of the "strife" among the disciples, "which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24ff.)? This is, admittedly, a sin not confined to Methodists; we may even plead the necessity of self-defense and remind, for example, our Anglican brethren, that in their dealings with our orders they exhibit far too readily, however unconsciously, what to the foreign observer must look uncommonly like the English version of the *Herrenvolk* idea. But none of us are guiltless here; and it should by now be recognized as part of our bounden duty and common honesty to take account of the nontheological factors in much of the high-

sounding jargon about recognition or nonrecognition of each others' orders. It is, after all, very possible that, having settled our respective places among ourselves, He may yet say to us: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23); and it is certain that the apostles' competition about "places" could have not been more out of order than at the crucial moment of the last supper. Even the word "authority" is out of order here; it belongs, together with the exercise of "lordship" to the realm of the kings of the Gentiles (Luke 22:25). *Κυριεύειν* and *ἐξουσιάζειν*, for all their Christian associations, have an irresistible bend toward the purely secular; and the words of Christ which follow in the Lukan passage, heavily underlined by the washing of the disciples' feet in the Johanne parallel (13:1ff.), reveal with startling clarity the extent of our secularization: "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). That—nothing else—is the genuine meaning of "ministry"! When Friedrich von Bodelschwingh in May, 1933, was elected to the highest office in the pre-Hitler Church, he went out of his way to deprecate the new title *Reichsbischof* and to express his preference for *Reich-Diakon*. He must have remembered that He whom the apostle called "Chief Shepherd and Bishop" (1 Peter 2:21 and 5:4), refers to Himself in the verse just quoted as *Diakonos*. A few months later, just to tell you the end of the story, Ludwig Müller, chosen by Hitler to replace Bodelschwingh, and put into power by trickery and force, enthroned himself in the Cathedral in Berlin on the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, when—unfortunately for him—the appointed Gospel read with great glee in all the churches throughout the country was: "Friend, move down; for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke 14:11).

There is a second trend running contrary to the scriptural purpose of ordination, and it is the secularization of the minister's proper business. Here the Methodist is apt to be the chief of sinners, literally running away with the happy notion that the King's business requires haste, and sustained by the common popular belief that Wesley's attitude to all theological

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issues was essentially pragmatic. Ours, by contrast to all credal systems, is supposed to be "the religion that works." So the minister becomes the administrator, the promoter of new plans for the kingdom, the director of parish or district activities. Preaching and the pastorate are no longer normative; one can be appointed, and presumably ordained, to a post on the staff of a large city church in charge of "membership development." We are all familiar with the description in the recent survey by Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Williams of the complete transformation which the traditional concept of the ministry has undergone and is still undergoing in our day, and especially in this country. Maybe we have resigned ourselves to the inevitable. But it would be a useful (and somewhat shattering) study to compare our present Methodism with what the Wesleys, both John and Charles, mean by "business." "What is the office of a Christian Minister? To watch over souls, as he that must give account."²⁴ "What are the rules of a Helper? (Nr. 11) You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend, and be spent, in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most."²⁵ "Thy love attend me all my days, and my sole business by Thy praise." "'Tis all my business here below to cry: Behold the Lamb!" This can be quite gaily proclaimed: "the business pursue He hath made me to do, and rejoice that I ever was born"; but it is done in the realization that "a charge to keep I have, a God to glorify . . . And, oh, Thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give . . . Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall for ever die."²⁶

I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I know that it is written: "there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord" and that the "administrators" figure in the apostle's list of charismatic functions—second from the bottom of the list, as one of my friends in the Drew administration told us in a recent sermon (1 Cor. 12:5 and 28). All my plea is that each one of these functions be clearly understood and exercised as the Spirit's gift, and that the multiple ministry which is developing be consciously related to the "sole business" of Wesley's lines. "Christ has many services to be done," says the Covenant Ritual.

Let us take care lest the priesthood of all believers which we so readily profess be perverted into the profanation of all ministries. What matters is that the minister know himself to be primarily a servant, and specifically a servant of the Word. If the feeding of God's flock with this Word is not going to be his business, he should not be ordained for it; if it is, he should not be allowed to forget it. The dispensation of the Gospel committed to a man is a solemn and awesome thing; the dispensation for the sacrament mailed to a student with the bishop's rubber stamp is a mockery of the sacred ministry. This is, in fact, the third form of our growing secularization, more subtle, but no less pernicious than the previous two: it is to ignore the purpose of ordination by the very treatment which the Church applies to her own orders and ordinands.

In speaking of Word and Sacrament within the same sentence and touching upon the practical dilemma of our younger brethren, we have already raised the next point of the *range* of orders. It is common Protestant assumption to regard the ministry as *ministerium verbi et sacramentorum*; and Wesley, as we have seen, sides with the Reformers in attaching central importance to the *rite vocatus*, the man lawfully called to his public office. But this is not the whole story. Wesley has both theological and practical difficulties in identifying himself wholeheartedly with the Reformers' position;²⁷ and consequently, holding to that position, we have our difficulties with him. On the theological side he maintains the Old Testament distinction between the prophetic and the priestly office, equates it with that between the evangelist's and pastor's (or bishop's) functions in the New Testament, traces it to the Scottish Presbyterian custom which does not allow the merely licensed preacher to administer the sacrament, and then applies the same rule to the Methodist preachers.²⁸ "In what light are we to consider ourselves? . . . As extraordinary messengers, raised up to provoke the ordinary ones to jealousy. In the order hereto, one of our first rules was given to each Preacher: 'You are to do that part of the work which we appoint.' But what work was this? Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments; to exercise the

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priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind; it was the farthest from our thoughts. And if any Preacher had taken such a step, we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connection.”²⁹

In the practice of my native Lutheran Church the same distinction was, and probably still is, observed: the *licentia concionandi* obtained after the first examination did not entitle us to the *licentia porrigendi sacramenta*. Yet, when we were ordained, after the years of apprenticeship and second examination, it was specifically “the work of an evangelist,” *das evangelische Predigtamt* (2 Timothy 4:5), which was committed unto us, and the sacrament, not otherwise mentioned, was implicitly included in this charge. This should not surprise anyone who knows his New Testament; there is no scriptural basis for, or even indirect reference to, a separate ordination for the administration of the sacraments.³⁰ Audible and visible word are, in fact, inseparable; and this must find its recognition in the ordinal. Moore, Wesley’s biographer, immediately detected the weak spot in the sermon on the ministerial office, and in his famous editorial footnote recalls that in the New Testament “no priesthood is mentioned but that of our Lord; (but) I could not think that what he had said concerning the Evangelists and the Pastors, or Bishops, was agreeable to what we read there: viz., that the latter had a right to administer the sacraments, which the former did not possess. I observed: ‘Sir, you know that the *Evangelists* Timothy and Titus were ordered by the Apostle to ordain *Bishops* in every place; and surely they could not impart to them an authority which they did not themselves possess.’ He looked earnestly at me for some time, but not with displeasure. He made no reply, and soon introduced another subject. The man of one book could not dispute against it. I believe he saw that his love to the Church, from which he never deviated unnecessarily, had, in this instance, led him a little too far.”³¹

How right Moore’s instinct was could be shown, if we had time, by an investigation of the roles of priesthood and sacri-

fice in certain aspects of Wesley's sacramental doctrine; it must be enough to mention it in passing.³² The slow emergence of our Church from the "society" status has, of course, also to be kept in mind, and our whole uncertainty about ordination is very much related to it. There are still, as we go on briefly to look at the practical side of Wesley's difficulties, several features of the "extraordinary" plan of early Methodism which characterize, to this very day, our ecclesiastical administrations—on both sides of the Atlantic—and complicate our task considerably. Not only is the range of orders materially restricted by the untenable division between the word and sacrament, it is also limited both in space and in time by the special circumstances under which Wesley's "Plan" was designed. In space—by which I mean the fact that he was willing to ordain only where and in so far as emergency cases forced his hand: first for America, then for Scotland and lastly, most reluctantly, for England.³³ And even in America the original number of ordinands of what may be called the class of 1784 was confined to 12. Coke sensed the problem that is still very much with us when he, with one stroke of the pen, removed the restriction and signed himself: "Bishop in the Church of God."³⁴ Then, secondly, there is the itinerancy, our most conspicuous limitation in time. This is commonly regarded, particularly in the old country, as the one part of our heritage which must never be surrendered; it is what people have in mind when they quote with relish the Minutes of the 1836 Conference: "Methodism, piece by piece as it was wanted, came down from heaven from God."³⁵

Our concern here is not with the case for either the prosecution or the defense; Wesley certainly had both apostolic precedent and common sense on his side, and few of us can stand up to his devastating self-estimate: "I know, were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep. Nor can I believe it was ever the will of our Lord that any congregation should have one teacher only."³⁶ But whatever the gain, we have lost—or rather, never had—the truth and beauty of the induction service to which our brethren in the other denominations can look for-

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ward, and with it the all-important notion that the ministry, however itinerant, is in its essence pastoral; only of late, and only on this side of the water, has the "preacher" come to be called "Pastor."

Still it is fatally easy for the flock to get rid of the shepherd, and as we all know, it is not always through the regular channel of the Pastoral Relations Committee that a man's annual reappointment can be forestalled before his work is done; thus the system tends to scatter where it should gather, and to turn the servant of the Word into a "manpleaser" (Col. 3:22); instead of preaching the Gospel, he may think of the security of tenure. All this is the letter, not the spirit of Wesley. He would station and move the preachers, not at the whim of the people, but as the needs of the kingdom demanded it; the termination of appointments was in the hands of, and for the good of, the whole Church ("the ministry appoints the ministry");³⁷ and the son in the Gospel who had joined himself to our venerable father was, under God, responsible only to him and remained the lifelong servant of the conference.

Lifelong servant? We may well face the question mark here. Disobedience to "orders" undoubtedly means, on Reformation premises, that the charge to the ordinand is forfeited and must be revoked; for instance, when he "departs from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits" (1 Tim. 4:1). Wesley was never slow to apply this. But there is also the positive possibility of a call to a specific office for a limited period of time. So far as I know, it is only in regard to the episcopate that modern Methodism has ever contemplated and discussed this. Whatever the merit and final outcome of this particular proposal may be, the idea itself allows of a wider application. I think of the special nonpastoral varieties of the modern ministry of which we have spoken, and I can recall in my own life a second "ordination" to the ministry of teaching (*Lehramt*), when in 1935 we began our work in the catacombs of the *Kirchliche Hochschule* in Berlin. The proper term here should be "induction" rather than "ordination"; and, more limited still, "licensing" in the case of the layman who has to be authorized for ministerial

and sacramental duties in the absence of the regular pastor. If all these things are to be "done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40), rather than by the aforesaid method of "dispensations," two essential requirements must be met: the office should not be exercised without public commission—"no man taketh this honour unto himself" (Hebr. 5:4)—and the commission should be so phrased as to describe exactly what the ordinand is going to do.

As we consider the possibility of termination, we have to say a word about Reception into Full Connexion, which is another Methodist "singularity," to use Wesley's term, bearing upon our concept of ordination. Sometimes it seems as though we treat it with far greater seriousness, and historically, in the British practice for the first four decades following Wesley's death, it was "virtual" ordination: "The Conference authorizes me (the President) to say, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, that you are now received into Full Connexion with this body."³⁸ Nuelsen, speaking of the questions which the *Discipline* asks at the Reception Service, finds that "they express the Methodist doctrine of the preaching ministry far more purely, clearly, and thoroughly than the questions of the ordination ritual." Ordination as such, according to him, "gives nothing to the preacher . . . the act decisive for the life and work of a Methodist preacher is not his ordination, but his reception into full connexion and thus into the world-wide fellowship of Methodist preachers. So he enters into a status for life (*Lebensstellung*), which can be nullified only through voluntary resignation or disciplinary proceedings."³⁹ Am I right in thinking that in our dealings with such issues as the marriage of probationers in Britain or the admission of women into the ministry in this country the real hurdle has been connectional reception rather than ordination, and that the one can still be withheld after the other has been granted?

This brings us directly to the *form* of our orders—form both in the sense of ministerial structure and of ordination ritual. To start with the latter: we cannot be sure of the exact form used in 1784 by Wesley in Bristol and by Coke in Baltimore,⁴⁰

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but it is safe to assume that it was substantially the Ordinal of the English Prayer Book, with the obvious substitutions of "elder" for "priest," "superintendent" for "bishop," and "ordination" for "consecration." The imposition of hands has remained the rule in the Methodist Episcopal Church (or Churches) ever since, while in Britain it is considered unnecessary, yet fairly freely given to ordinands for missionary service, and generally adopted only by the Conference of 1836. The minutes of that conference state no more than this resolution, "after mature deliberation . . . that this shall be our standing rule and usage in future years."⁴¹ The theological motivation will not have been very far from that used in Calvin's Institutes (Book IV, Chapter 3): "Though there is no express precept for the imposition of hands, yet since we find it to have been constantly used by the Apostles, such a punctual observance of it by them ought to have the force of a precept with us. And certainly this ceremony is highly useful both to recommend to the people the dignity of the ministry, and to admonish the person ordained that he is no longer his own master, but devoted to the service of God and the Church. Besides, it will not be an unmeaning sign, if it be restored to its true origin. For if the Spirit of God institute nothing in the Church in vain, we shall perceive that this ceremony, which proceeded from him, is not without its use, provided it be not perverted by a superstitious abuse." The words accompanying, or rather accompanied by, the imposition of hands are: "take thou authority to execute the office of a deacon," or: "authority as an elder to preach the Word of God, and to administer the holy sacraments in the congregation," preceded by (in the case of elders and bishops): "the Lord pour upon thee the Holy Spirit for the office and work of (elder or bishop)"; in the English form: "mayest thou receive the Holy Spirit." This is exactly as in the Anglican Ordinal, where the Spirit also is invoked only at the priest's and bishop's consecration, but with the all-important difference that the optative mode is replaced by a very categorical imperative—really an indicative: "Receive the Holy Ghost."

Now here we come to the crux of the matter. If you cannot

accept, without reservation, this indicative with the implied belief that it is for the Church, by the command of Christ, to give to her ordinands the Holy Ghost, then you cannot in good conscience be an Anglican. But can you, in that case, continue to hold the doctrine of the threefold order of the ministry? Wesley thought he could; or, as he would say, he firmly believed in it; that is, in Rattenbury's words, "he believed in episcopacy as an ecclesiastical method, but denied it as a Christian doctrine."⁴² And Methodism in the United States has faithfully followed him. As Nuelsen puts it, "the otherwise so very progressive Americans have conserved this piece of the old world until today, while the otherwise so much more conservative English Methodists, when finally they introduced ordination, abolished the traditional Anglican usage and chose the one ordination of presbyters."⁴³ It is a divergence—reflected, of course, beyond America and Britain—at a central point which in our ecumenical age World Methodism is bound to feel; a weakness in our common witness which one would like to see removed.

Which side is right? My friend Hamby Barton in his recent article on the "Concept of Ordination in Methodism"⁴⁴ makes the claim that "Methodism preserves the diaconate unchanged, clarifies the presbyterate and redefines the episcopacy"; and for this last point refers me to the Episcopal Address at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1934, where the life-long episcopate is defended against the mere notion of "office" as an "order" of "presiding, directive, and administrative" quality.⁴⁵ The Anglicans, of course, ever since Seabury's day, have remained unimpressed, in spite of the long list of "Vindications" from our side that title and fill the pages of apologetic literature throughout the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ The Methodist bishop is still, not only in their eyes, but in our own, the "General Superintendent" that Wesley had in mind; at his lowest, "Chairman of the District," at his highest *Pastor Pastorum*, but nothing more than that. The name bishop is scriptural enough; but the threefold order of the ministry is not thereby proved. And our real trouble lies not (at least, we hope

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it) with the bishops, but, as Nuelsen has clearly seen and shown, with the differentiation between elders and deacons. I think he is rash in reading out of the New Testament any doctrine of ordination at all, even if we cannot read our own ordinals into it; and I am sure he is wrong in extolling the quasi-episcopal Reception into Full Connexion at the expense of ordination. But in his attack upon the "double ordination" of Methodist ministers as a "Romanist relic" (*katholisches Erbstück*), I find it hard to disagree with him.⁴⁷ It just does not make sense in the Methodist Church to ordain a man for such partial functions "reading the Holy Scriptures in the Church of God, and preaching the Word," and in that authorization to include Baptism and exclude Holy Communion (except by way of assistance to the elder);⁴⁸ it makes still less sense, two years later, to ordain a man to the full administration of the sacraments which by virtue of episcopal dispensation he has carried on all along; and it cannot possibly be squared with the New Testament account of the diaconate which is intentionally distinct from the ministry of the Word. Paragraph 563 of the 1956 *Discipline* provides that "A General Conference shall have the authority to change the provisions for the ordination of ministers in such way that the ordination of an elder may follow immediately upon his ordination as a deacon"; this goes some way towards Nuelsen's proposal to abolish the diaconate, defeated in 1932, but now in force in German Methodism.⁴⁹ I am bound to confess that his plea, coming as it did from a bishop in the American Methodist tradition, has so far not been convincingly answered, and that the present ordinal of the British Conference has still very much to commend itself to our attention: "Mayest thou receive the Holy Spirit for the office and work of a Christian Minister and Pastor, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. And be thou faithful Dispenser of the Word of God and of His holy Sacraments, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Take thou authority to fulfill the office of a minister in the Church of Christ."

If we could see our way—not necessarily to accept this formula as it stands, but to rethink the meaning of ordination in

this light, we would gain a great deal in the rescue of our Wesleyan heritage from its obvious Anglican hangover, and in the restoration of the basic Reformation unity of the one ministry of Word and Sacraments. Two more practical hints may perhaps be given before we leave the matter of the form of orders. If legal and administrative considerations make it appear desirable that we have a "steppingstone" before admitting a candidate to full ministerial orders, then the present recognized category of "persons licensed to preach" could very possibly take the place of the ordination of deacons. As it stands, the two rituals overlap at the crucial point: we say to the licensee in a form even more emphatic than that used for the Deacon: "Take thou authority to preach the truths of the Old and New Testaments in the Church of God." (I say "more emphatic" in the hope that "the truths" indicate the Word itself, the whole Word and nothing but the Word.) The second hint concerns the actual conduct of our ordination services. If there is any truth at all in the idea of ordination which I have tried to put before you, then it is intolerable to have this solemn service marred by the anticlimax of the bishop's reading out immediately thereafter the interminable list of annual appointments. This will not do, and moreover, as the list is in the hands of most interested people, there is not the slightest need for it; the last-minute changes in the final drafts are all that have to be announced, and the ordination service is surely not the place for it. I for one would not like to be in the shoes of our young brethren at whose ordination I have been present, whose lifelong memory of that day could have been very different without these embellishments. Need one add that the only proper conclusion for the ritual is the sacrament of Holy Communion, at least in a shortened form and for participation by the ordinands and their nearest relatives?

Finally, we have to look at the *test* of ordination. In a sense the two practical hints just given have led already in this direction, insofar as they had to do with preparation for the ministry. I fear I cannot promise you that this brief concluding section will be any less controversial than the previous paragraph—quite probably more so—but it will in any case give us some-

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thing to discuss. Let us start from the safe ground of the New Testament. In the questions of range and form of our orders, concrete scriptural directives were, in the nature of the case, unobtainable, and there must be room for variety; but when it comes to the testing or ordinands, the evidence is plentiful, and the instructions are very specific. We have noticed at the outset the Pastoral Epistles with their marked interest in the type of persons suited for the ministry; and it is a direct quote from 1 Timothy 5:22 when the Prayer Book asks God so to "guide and govern the minds of Thy servants, the Bishops and Pastors of Thy flock, that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons, to serve in the sacred ministry of Thy Church." Wesley was deeply conscious of this, infinitely more so than the mother Church of England in his century; and admission into the company of Methodist preachers was, and in a measure still is, contingent upon tests of a very different caliber from those applied to candidates for Anglican orders. "Now, I pray, what is the common examination either for deacon's or priest's orders to this? Why, whether they understand a little Latin and Greek and can answer a few trite questions in the science of divinity? Alas, how little does this avail! Does your Lordship examine whether they serve Christ or Belial? Whether they love God or the world? whether they ever had any serious thoughts about heaven or hell? whether they have any real desire to save their own souls or the souls of others? If not, what have they to do with Holy Orders? And what will become of the souls committed to their care?"⁵⁰

You can see how close Wesley's insistence upon "fitness" comes to the biblical pattern. The "approbation" of which the Pastoral Epistles speak is both doctrinal and moral, and, above all, experiential; the "workman of God who needeth not be ashamed" must prove himself as the "good soldier of Jesus Christ, enduring hardness" (2 Tim. 2:5 and 15). And only thus can his efficacy in the ministry be determined. Wesley is fond of using the medical analogy (which again is in keeping with our Lord's command to heal as well as preach, and with the apostolic notion of the wholesome doctrine, the "hygienic"

logos) of the physician known by his cures rather than by his degrees; "reasonable men will be much inclined to think, he that saves no souls, is no Minister of Christ. . . . 'O but he is ordained, and therefore has authority.' Authority to do what? 'To save all souls that will put themselves under his care.' True; but he does not, in fact, save them that are under his care; therefore, what end does his authority serve?"⁵¹ This, clearly, is the New Testament meaning of authority; not the permission laid down in Canon Law or in the *Discipline*, but the ἐξουσία of Jesus and His apostles; in another of Wesley's favorite quotations from the Pastoral Epistles, not the form, but the power of godliness. By this alone the ordained is tested, and his ministry judged.

That Wesley did not from here proceed to dispense with theological training, that Asbury learned Hebrew while riding his circuits, and that the reading demands upon the early Methodist preachers make our seminary curricula look very much more like Sunday schools, may in our present company be taken for granted. We know it as our bounden duty to uphold the academic standards of the ministry over against that still far too popular brand of Pseudo-Methodism manifested in the Local Preacher's famous dictum: "I thank the Lord for my ignorance," and conclusively answered by Bishop McConnell: "Well, brother, you sure have a great deal to be thankful for." But we are not thereby justified, and not entirely free from the idolization of degrees exposed by Wesley. In the light of his concept of authority and efficacy, we have every reason to ask ourselves what exactly our current system of training does to prepare a man for such an ordination question as this: "Are you determined out of the Holy Scriptures so to instruct the people committed to your charge that they may enter into eternal life?" And we have also every reason to examine what exactly a B.D. degree has to do with qualification for ministerial orders or conference membership; no doubt there is some positive relation, but certainly no simple identity, and that on academic as well as ecclesiastical grounds.

When we have searched our own hearts, and only then, we

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must look further—beyond the classroom, as it were, into the vestry where our students are getting ready for their ordination. What we see there offers, so it seems to me, an odd and disturbing contrast to the picture which Wesley drew from his New Testament. Of all the epithets used in 1 Timothy 3 for the attitude of a bishop or deacon, the one he would pick out and underline is “grave.” In place of this we propagate the image of the minister as the “nice guy.” Whereas Wesley had learned and resolved, as we have seen, to “lay hands suddenly on no man,” we are very much in a hurry. We have been told firmly and officially that The Methodist Church in this country must within this quadrennium produce something like three or four times of the present annual figure of ordinands; and we have a program of promotion and recruitment to that effect. But to come back more directly to the fateful moment in the vestry: is it really true, as I have been told, that apart from the formal introduction in the conference session, many bishops do not meet with their ordinands at all before the service, do not ask for more than their credentials and compliance with the rubrics of the ritual? And if it is true, what possible administrative excuse can help our Church to survive the shock of this ordination practice?

There is still more to be said, and in the discharge of our teaching ministry which makes us responsible to the Church as a whole, it cannot be left unsaid. Our young brethren entering the ministry—I mean those that are in earnest about it—are in increasing numbers troubled about some of the test questions they have to answer before their admission to conference membership. There is the theological issue of perfection, and there is the moral issue of total abstinence. Naturally, I should be the first to rejoice over any page in the *Discipline* which tells me that it was “formulated by John Wesley and little changed throughout the years.”^{8a} But applying his own criterion of *sola scriptura*, I am compelled to admit that, while “going on to perfection” is a scriptural command, “perfect in love in this life” is a timetable not found in Holy Writ. It has been known that the Bishop prompted the hesitant ordinand with “Young man, the answer to this question is Yes”; it has also been known that

the Bishop absolved the whole group in advance by the statement that "of course" these questions do not mean literally what they say. This, needless to say, is no solution. The only possible answer to this point 3 in Paragraph 1924 is: "I expect to be made perfect in God's own good time." And a great deal of Wesley, especially Charles Wesley, could be cited in favor of that version. But far better to omit the question altogether in its present form.

Total abstinence, and in particular the nonsmoking pledge, is another matter. It cannot be read into Question 16 ("will you recommend fasting or abstinence, by precept and example?") nor into Wesley elsewhere nor has it any ground in the Word of God at all. In spite of this, it is now (I think, since 1940) anchored in the *Discipline*, and a candidate's refusal of the pledge can, in many conferences, bar his admission and keep him forever out of our ministry. I speak as a lifelong nonsmoker, and one who was ordained in a non-Methodist Church; this, I hope, does not disqualify me from registering the typical reaction which our current official policy is bound to evoke outside. A Methodist in Germany may drink, but must not smoke. A Methodist in Britain may smoke, but must not drink. A Methodist in America must do neither—no: a Methodist Protestant ordained before 1939 is still free to smoke; so are, of course, all ministers admitted before the present legislation, and all the laymen who, enjoying it for themselves, adamantly deny it as unbecoming to ministers. It is a truly pathetic picture; it makes us a laughingstock among other denominations; it creates unending confusion within the family of World Methodism; and it costs us some of our most valuable future ministers, who are serious enough not to promise what they do not intend to keep.

What had Wesley to say about the character of a Methodist? "Our religion does not lie in doing what God hath not enjoined, or abstaining from what He hath not forbidden . . . from marriage, or from meat and drinks, which are all good if received with thanksgiving. Therefore, neither will any man, who knows whereof he affirms, fix the mark of a Methodist here—in any actions or customs purely indifferent, undetermined by the Word

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of God.”⁵³ And there is another side to it. At the time when the consciences of our young brethren are troubled with the statutes and traditions of men, the yoke that neither we nor our fathers were willing to bear, nothing is heard about the real items that one would expect to figure in an ordinand’s examination. What they are asked is: are you married? have you a car? have you a B.D.? do you smoke? why did you have to go to Drew? What they are not asked—beyond the formal ritual question—is: do you believe in Jesus Christ our Lord? A few moments ago we may have smiled at Wesley’s denunciation of the Anglican bishops of his time; now his words must strike with unmistakable directness at our own situation: “Does your Lordship examine whether they serve Christ or Belial? whether they love God or the world? whether they have any real desire to save their own souls or the souls of others? If not, what have they to do with Holy Orders? And what will become of the souls committed to their care?”

I hope I have spoken the truth, and spoken it in love of our Church. I cannot expect quick general agreement either on the principles or the practical conclusions which are before you now. It is only too painfully clear that Methodism, in Nuelsen’s phrase, has neither a uniform doctrine nor a uniform practice of ordination.⁵⁴ But to rest content with this state of affairs would be sheer defeatism. Our danger is certainly not uniformity, but anarchy, and at least the search for sound doctrine and sound practice should begin now—begin in the spirit of Wesley:

Thou everlasting Strength Divine,
All things are possible to Thee;
Let every messenger of Thine
Out of the depth of poverty,
On Jesus every moment call,
And feel that Thou art all in all.⁵⁵

THESES FOR DISCUSSION

1. From the Old Testament pattern in Numbers 27:15ff we learn, in the words of Benjamin Gregory, “the essential elements of ordination: 1) The divine call; 2) The nature of the office:

leadership is stewardship; 3) The grand primary qualification: a man in whom is the Spirit; 4) The mode of induction: public charge and imposition of hands; 5) The correlative duty of the congregation: that all the children of Israel may be obedient."

2. The essence of ordination in the New Testament is "separation unto the Gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). The factors operative in the preparation for the "call to preach" are, according to the Pastoral Epistles, the mercy of conversion (1 Tim. 1:12f), the religion of the family (2 Tim. 1:3-5), the inspiration of scripture (2 Tim. 3:14ff), the apostolic appointment (Tit. 1:5). The life-long probation of the minister, according to the same source, is doctrinal, moral, experiential; the "workman of God" must "prove" himself under the cross as a "good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3, 15).

3. The form of the ministry and the ritual for ordination cannot be copied from the New Testament, and need not be copied from Jewish or Christian tradition, but must be in accordance with its patterns (Gospels, Acts, Epistles).

4. The ministry is God's gift to the Church. He "makes" ministers by divine call (Acts 26:16; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 4:11); the Church acknowledges this by "ordering" them (the *rite vocatus* of the 39 Articles).

5. The ordinand takes his authority from Christ through the Church;⁵⁸ he is a man "under orders" rather than "in orders"; it remains for His Lord to command and for him to obey.

6. The Methodist interest in ordination is, in accordance with the New Testament, more in the purpose than in the "validity" of orders; more in the character than in the status of the minister; more in the power to save than in the permit to officiate.

7. "The ministry appoints the ministry" is a good Methodist description of the *via media* between the concepts of an office held by delegation from the Bishop, and, on the other hand, one dependent upon congregational consent.

8. There is no evidence in the New Testament of any ordination for the specific purpose of sacramental administration. The Reformers are, therefore, right in speaking consistently of the one ministry of Word and Sacraments.

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9. Wesley's attempt to separate these two can be explained by the "extraordinary" character and function of the early Methodist preachers, it cannot be defended after the emergence of The Methodist Church from the "society" status.

10. In the ordinations of 1784 and after right and duty are on Wesley's side ("he did what no other man could have done, but he did it");⁵⁷ rite and theory, however, cannot be called or made fully consistent with either episcopalian or presbyterian orders.⁵⁸

11. The so-called threefold order of the ministry is traditional rather than scriptural.⁵⁹ It is doubtful whether the shell which Wesley treasured can be preserved after it has been emptied of its Anglican meaning.

12. Deacons' orders in their present form have neither warrant in scripture nor meaning in practice. They might be replaced by the licensing of preachers on trial. For the current abuse of "dispensations" there is no excuse.

13. The itinerancy of Wesley and his preachers could claim apostolic precedent and apostolic success; but it depended upon an army of trained local preachers, and it was never meant to replace the residential pastorate. In the light of these factors—as a means to an end⁶⁰—it must be judged today and protected against its manifest dangers; the Pastor's move is to be determined not by the custom of years, nor by the will of the people, but solely by the needs of the work of God.

14. Ordination is to the lifelong and full-time ministry in the Church of God; it cannot be repeated or supplemented, but it can be forfeited through a man's disobedience to his "orders." Induction is to the pastorate in a local parish or to a specific form of the ministry, such as that of the theological teacher, the industrial chaplain, the District Superintendent. License is to the time-limited exercise of certain ministerial functions (including the administration of the sacraments) in the absence of, or assistance to, the regular Pastor. Each of these acts is in the nature of a public commission in the presence of the worshipping congregation.

15. The episcopacy in Methodism is not a separate order of the ministry. It can be described as "presiding, directive,

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administrative"; but its essential function is that of the pastor *pastorum*. This must find expression in the relation of the Bishop to his ordinands before, on, and after the day of their ordination.

16. The proper conclusion of the Ordination Ritual is the Service of Holy Communion. The reading of appointments is entirely out of place here.

17. "Reception into Full Connexion" must be theologically reconsidered in relation to ordination, and the form of the present questionnaires—ritual and disciplinary, official and unofficial—must be revised in accordance with the norm of scripture, the honesty of experience and the real priorities of the ministry.

18. The primary need of the Church is not for more ministers, but for "fit persons." Methodism has yet to recognize its responsibility as a Connexion for a thorough theological training of its candidates, not divorced from the life of the parish, but free from the perpetual strain of financial pressure.

19. The person qualified for the ministry is not the holder of a B.D., but "the perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Seminary curriculum and seminary counseling alike must be directed towards this end. Theological teachers are pastorally responsible for the students in training and "prophetically" responsible to the Church for which they are trained.

20. "It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike" (Article XXII); but it is imperative, theologically and ecumenically, that the various branches of World Methodism come to a common understanding of their doctrine and practice or ordination.

POSTSCRIPT

The British Conference, which met in Bristol, had before it a statement by its Faith-and-Order Committee on Ordination in the Methodist Church. By courtesy of the Convener, the Rev. Rupert E. Davies, the draft was sent to me—just after my paper had been completed. Its paragraphs deal in turn with the Ministry in the New Testament, in the History of the Church, in

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Methodism; then with Ordination in the Methodist Church, Probationers and Students in College, Dispensations for Holy Communion, Administration of Baptism, Deaconess Order, Lay Ministries, Ministers wishing to serve External Organizations, Legal Position of Ministers teaching in schools, Ministers in part-time secular employment, and a "tent-making" ministry overseas. This is, of course, a document still quite unofficial and awaiting the reaction of the Conference. It represents, as Mr. Davies says in his letter to me, "necessarily an attempted reconciliation between different viewpoints." And its orientation is practical rather than theological. "But it soon became evident to the Committee that they (sc. the practical problems) could not be solved except on the basis of theological conviction about the nature of the Church and the Ministry." I quote one paragraph from the section "the Ministry in Methodism" which has the most direct relevance to my address:

"It may be fairly said that Methodist Ministers are both travelling preachers in the Methodist Connexion and Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the Church of God. They have authority to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, and they normally exercise pastoral care in a number of local congregations. They thus constitute a ministry which corresponds to the presbyter-bishops of the New Testament. Some of the *charismata* of the Holy Spirit which in the New Testament period were widely distributed over the members of the Church are now ordinarily exercised in Methodism by the ordained ministry, but they are also bestowed by the Spirit on those who are outside the ordained ministry. The Reformation office of 'deacon,' closely corresponding to the New Testament *diaconos*, is held among us by the various kinds of 'stewards'; who are called to perform their stewardship to the glory of God and the building up of the Church. Chairmen of Districts and Superintendents of Circuits, though they have additional functions to those of the ordained ministry in general, have the same ministry as the rest."

The trend of this is evidently not towards a simple abolition of the diaconate, but rather towards its restoration to the genuine

New Testament meaning. This is in line with Wesley's Note on Acts 6:2 which should have been quoted above on p. 47: "In the first Church, the primary business of apostles, evangelists and bishops was to preach the word of God; the secondary, to take a kind of paternal care (the Church being then like a family) for the food, especially of the poor, the strangers, and the widows. Afterwards, the deacons of both sexes were constituted for this latter business; and whatever time they had to spare from this they employed in works of spiritual mercy. But their proper business was to take care of the poor. And when some of them afterwards preached the gospel, they did this, not by virtue of their deaconship, but of another commission, that of evangelists, which they probably received, not before, but after they were appointed deacons. And it is not unlikely that others were chosen *deacons*, or *stewards*, in their room, when any of these commenced evangelists."

Editor's Note:

In accepting the invitation to present to the Convocation of Methodist Theological Faculties, the paper on "The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism," Professor Hildebrandt wrote:

"The ordination issue is more narrow than the Doctrine of the Ministry, but also—thanks to Wesley—much more complicated and bound to be controversial. In addition to this, the difference of outlook and treatment between British and American Methodism is inevitably coming to the fore, and at many points I find myself raising awkward questions where I would have preferred positive statements."

Everyone recognizes with appreciation the difficulty and complicated issues which any treatment of this question must of necessity encounter.

NOTES

1. Wesley, *Works* (Jackson Edition), X, 126.
2. "I believe several who are not episcopally ordained are nevertheless called of God to preach the Gospel. Yet I have no exception to the Twenty-third Article, though I judge there are exempt cases." *Letters* (Standard Edition), III, 200.

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3. *Letters*, III, 195.

4. John Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism*, London 1951, p. 149.

5. *Op. cit.*, I, 10.

6. In "The Apostolic Ministry" (Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 7, 1953, pp. 21ff.), Arnold Ehrhardt has argued that "St. Luke chose the precedent of Numbers 27:18ff. for his description of the ordination of the Seven," and thus "rejected the precedent of the ordination of the seventy Elders, Numbers 11:16ff." From this he concludes that "the ordination of the Seven is meant by St. Luke to establish a precedent for all ordinations in the Catholic Church" and that "the choice of the ordination of Joshua by Moses as the precedent for the ordination of the Seven was made in order that the difference of the Church's ministry from the membership in the Jerusalem Sanhedrin might appear clearly." Eduard Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und in Neuen Testament*, Göttingen, 1951, is very much more guarded: "It is not possible to read more out of Acts 6:1-6 than what the passage itself says. . . . Not every question about ordination posed by the present time can be answered through New Testament research" (pp. 78, 101).

7. F. Hildebrandt, *Wanted: A Methodist Doctrine of the Ministry*, Drew Gateway, Winter 1959, p. 86, No. 4.

8. Cf. John L. Nuelsen, *Die Ordination im Methodismus*, Bremen 1935, esp. pp. 16-20 and 158 and the book by Lohse, the conclusion of which has important ecumenical implications: "The sober and matter-of-fact manner in which the New Testament speaks about ordination is a warning against placing it in the center of the debate, as is being done nowadays in the ecumenical discussion about apostolic succession. One has to avoid both the 'high church-catholic' overestimate of 'orders' and the degradation of ordination to a mere solemn rite, a possible *Adiaphoron*" (*op. cit.*, p. 101).

9. "The points to be guarded in Christian ordination are: 1) The Divine call indicated by the grace and gifts which God alone can bestow. 2) The right of the people to approve men admitted into the pastorate. 3) The solemn setting apart of the office of an elected candidate by those who are Ministers already, after due examination and testing of his fitness by them, and a charge given by the highest officer of the Church, in the sight of the congregation, who are present as the representatives of the people generally, and are bound to be obedient. 4) The devolving of the ministerial office, with a solemn and expressive form, by the present holders of it on men who are to be first sharers in and then successors to that office" (2 Tim. 2:2). *Op. cit.*, I, 10f.

10. *Letters*, III, 182.

11. Conference of 1747. See "Large Minutes," Vol. I, London 1862, p. 36.

12. The following references all from Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.

13. "Lord Mansfield told me last year that ordination was separation. This my brother does not and will not see; or that he has renounced the principles and practice of his whole life; that he has acted contrary to

all his declarations, protestations, and writings; robbed his friends of their boasting; and left an indelible blot on his name, as long as it shall be remembered." Charles Wesley to Dr. Chandler, April 28, 1785, quoted from Tyerman's *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, Vol. III, p. 439.

14. *Letters*, III, 150:146.

15. *Letters*, III, 150. See also Wesley's Note on Acts 7:27: "Under the pretence of a want of a call by man, the instruments of God are often rejected."

16. Edgar W. Thompson, *Wesley, Apostolic Man*, London, 1957. The phrase occurs in Francis Asbury's letter to Jacob Gruber (July 19, 1815): "In thirty years he had proved himself Apostolic man. John Wesley accepted ordination by hands; had exercised all the powers of apostolic man of God; for thirty years." I owe this reference to the Rev. J. Hamby Barton.

17. *Letters*, VII, 262.

18. Quoted from Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley as Revealed by His Letters*, London, 1948, p. 135.

19. *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, London, 1928, p. 193.

20. "Wesley did not mean that a bishop was only a Presbyter, but that a Presbyter was really a bishop, when he used episcopal functions. Wesley's ordinations were not in intention presbyterian, they were episcopal; they were given by a presbyter acting as a bishop; they were given by one who claimed to be, and for that reason gave them, a New Testament bishop." *The Conversion of the Wesleys*, London, 1938, pp. 225-6.

21. A. W. Harrison, *The Separation of Methodism from the Church of England*, Wesley Historical Society Lecture No. 11, London, 1945, p. 11; and Bowmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-9.

22. A. Raymond George, "Ordination in Methodism," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 1951, p. 156ff. The sentences quoted above are on pp. 160, 161, 169.

23. See also 2 Peter 3:11 and 14: "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness . . . be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

24. *Works*, Vol. VIII, 309.

25. *Works*, Vol. VIII, 310.

26. From the Methodist Hymnbook, London, 1933, Nos. 573; 92, 874; 578.

27. "Modern laziness has jumbled together the two distinct offices of preaching and administering the sacraments. But, be that as it may, I will rather lose 20 societies than separate from the Church." *Letters* VII, 372.

28. Sermon on the Ministerial Office: *Works* VII, 273ff. Further sermons to be consulted are "On Obedience to Pastors" (*ibid.* 108ff.) and "On Corrupting the Word of God" (*ibid.* 468ff.).

29. *Works*, VII, 277.

30. Lohse's admission: "We would very much like to know in what relation ordination stood to sacramental administration in the earliest Church; yet the New Testament tells us nothing about this" (*op. cit.*, p. 101) will stand against Ehrhardt's forced attempt to refer "daily minis-

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tration" and "serve tables" in Acts 6:1-2 to the administration of the sacrament by the deacons (*op. cit.*, p. 21); and against Wesley's equally forced answer to John Topping's question: "By what authority I reconcile such a mission to preach with a non-administration of the sacraments? . . . By the authority of the very same scriptures; wherein we do not find that they who then preached (except Philip alone) did so much as administer baptism to their own converts" (*Letters*, III, 93).

31. *Works*, VII, 273 (note).

32. Cf. Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley*, London, 1948, p. 144 ff.; do., *Conversion of the Wesleys*, p. 225; Bowmer, *op. cit.*, p. 164f.

33. "His authorization through ordination of preachers to administer the sacraments did not necessarily license them to act in all places, if one may make a simple distinction. His license depended on the locality in which they were stationed, and he would not give it in places where properly authorized and reputable English priests were responsible." Rattenbury, *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, p. 194.

34. Cf. Bowmer, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

35. Quoted from E. G. Rupp, "Reflections on the Origin and Development of the English Methodist Tradition," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 1953, p. 169.

36. *Letters*, III, 195.

37. Quoted from the 1836 Conference discussion, as reported in *The Watchman*, by R. George, *op. cit.*, p. 167. It was meant by France as a definition of apostolic succession, but it serves also as a needed caution to remind us that Wesley "knew nothing of ordination contingent upon the consent of, or requiring the approval of the Church or congregation within which the ordinand was to minister." cf. Bowmer, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

38. Quoted by R. George, *op. cit.*, p. 166. Bowmer gives as the reason for the early abandonment of the imposition of hands the thought "that it might tend to create a division between those who had been ordained by Wesley and those who had not" (*op. cit.*, p. 160).

39. Nuelsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 161, 162, 164.

40. Bowmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 159; Nuelsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 146ff.

41. Minutes of the 1836 Conference, Question XXIV.

42. Rattenbury, *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, p. 194.

43. *Op. cit.*, pp. 106; 159.

44. *New Christian Advocate*, May, 1958.

45. Journal of the 1934 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, p. 382.

46. Nathan Bangs, *A Vindication of Methodist Episcopacy*, New York, 1820; John Emory, *A Defense of Our Fathers*, New York, 1880; etc.

47. *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-166.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 161; and see the important New Testament Note of Wesley on Acts 6:2 where deacons are identified with stewards and clearly distinguished from the preaching evangelists.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 9ff., 164.

50. *Letters*, VII, 31.

51. *Letters*, II, 149.

52. *Discipline*, 1956, #345 (p. 126).

53. *Works*, VIII, 341.

54. *Op. cit.*, pp. 162f.

55. *Poetical Works of J. and C. Wesley*, Vol. VI, p. 116.

56. "The authority by which I act is His, transmitted to me through His Apostles and those to whom they committed it; I hold it neither from the Church nor apart from the Church, but from Christ in the Church." Archbishop Temple to the Convocation of Canterbury, 1943, pp. 18ff. We can accept this statement with the understanding that the New Testament way of referring to "transmission" is that of 2 Tim. 2:2 ("the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"); the "orders," as Wesley saw (see above p. 35 and footnote 9) could, and indeed were, transmitted by presbyters; and that the whole emphasis of the passage is not on succession at all, but on faithfulness to the apostles' doctrine. Cf. again Rattenbury, *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, p. 194: "The power of ordination rests in the hands of the living Church and is not dependent on any succession, episcopal or presbyteral." (Rattenbury makes it clear that this is his own, not Wesley's opinion.)

57. Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns*, etc., p. 163.

58. "Another old preacher writing to his friend delivers his opinion to the following purpose: I wish they had been asleep when they began this business of ordination; it is neither episcopal nor presbyterian, but a mere hodge-podge of inconsistencies." John Whitehead, *The Life of the Reverend John Wesley*, London, 1796, Vol. II, p. 420.

59. Wesley's Note on Romans 16:5: "As yet the Christians at Rome had neither bishops nor deacons. So far were they from any shadow of papal power. Nay, there does not appear to have been in the whole city any more than one of these domestic churches. Otherwise there can be no doubt but St. Paul would have saluted them also."

60. "I would inquire: What is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in His fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth." *Letters*, II, 77f.

IV

Servant of Whose Word?

McMurry S. Richey

THESE ILLUMINATIONS of our past that we have had in previous chapters have shed much light also on our present. In turning now from the solid facts of history to the uncertainties of the changing present, will you share with an uncertain, troubled speaker in a tentative, exploratory, unfinished struggle with some problems of our ministry today? Already you have brought to bear upon them the diverse disciplines and perspectives represented in our discussion sessions. Hence this address differs from the others not only in matter and grasp but in linguistic task as well. That task is not so much informative or directive as expressive—to enhance or confess our common outlooks and discoveries, perhaps to utter Methodist “amens” to what has already been explored in our discussions here, and for that matter, through the past three years. For all of us have been hearing and reading some reappraisals, even “agonizing reappraisals,” of our ministry. We say “our” because theological professors are involved too, both directly and indirectly, in the problems and promises of the contemporary ministry. And our fundamental concern is with the crucial question, *Servant of whose word* is the minister of our day?

I

A cursory review of some recent rethinking of the pastoral ministry may serve to focus our recollection and concern. You will recall that while the more thoroughgoing, definitive Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada (by the “Niebuhr Committee”) and the Sage sociological studies by Dr. Samuel W. Blizard were beginning to be articulated, a succession of provocative professorial utterances thrust the prob-

lems of the ministry on public notice. Of the academic angels troubling the waters for our healing, Professor Wesley Shrader, then of Yale Divinity School, made the biggest splash with his warning in *Life* on "Why Ministers Are Breaking Down."¹ The burden of his concern was that many conscientious ministers are breaking down in failure, frustration, and guilt because of the multiple roles and impossible tasks expected of them by church congregations. Had not Professor Blizzard already bared "The Minister's Dilemma,"² showing that congregations demand most from their minister in the first two of his six "practitioner" roles of administrator, organizer, pastor, preacher, priest, and teacher, while the minister generally gives his life primarily to the other roles?

But Dr. William H. Hudnut, Jr., countered Dr. Shrader's alarm over ministerial mental health with a cheerier note: "Are Ministers Cracking Up?"³ He affirmed that most ministers find their work "exciting," "rewarding," "a high privilege, not an oppressive obligation," and counseled on discipline of time, task, and spirit to shuck nonessentials and concentrate on essential ministries. A much less sanguine response came from Dean Roy Pearson of Andover Newton Theological School.⁴ He acknowledged value in Dr. Shrader's warning, but shifted much of the responsibility from the congregation to the ailing minister himself. Some break down, he pointed out, because they are unsuited to the ministry but unable or unwilling to turn to other work. Others lack the realistic self-image and clarity of purpose to face multifarious demands, and fall into "excessive self-dispersal" and failure because of indecisiveness, illusions of indispensability, perfectionist demands on self and others, or pathological fear of disapproval. "The Tyranny of Expectations" rather than excessive work is the main problem, concurred Professor of Pastoral Care Samuel Southard.⁵ Our trouble is basically personal and religious: until brought to self-knowledge and self-acceptance as servants of God, we are servile to the approval of men.

The onus was shifted back to the church and society in the *Harper's* article by former clergyman, now college teacher,

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James B. Moore, "Why Young Ministers Are Leaving the Church."⁸ Mr. Moore blamed the minister's crisis less on his multiple functions and more on conflict between his expected role as minister and his personal integrity as a human being. Such conflict is occasioned, for example, when doctrinal cleavages between clergy and laity oblige the minister to preach what he no longer believes; or when double moral standards for clergy and laity tend to dehumanize him and his family; or when professional advancement depends on conformity, statistics, and politics.

Is there a one of us who does not know what Mr. Moore is talking about—and the other diagnosticians as well? What is to be said to these probing criticisms of our church, our calling, and ourselves? Perhaps all are justified, even when they differ; and with the Dodo in the *Alice in Wonderland* Caucus-race we can say, "*Everybody* has won; and *all* must have prizes." Certainly each of these writers has put his finger on real problems. Are there answers too? What encouragement is there that we can be freed from shallow conformity and the "tyranny of expectations" for a ministry of integrity, purpose, spontaneity, and creativity, for an authentic service to the Word of God?

II

Several things are being said, or need saying:

First. A clearer understanding of the nature and task of the ministry for our day is needed, and is being developed. Priorities and patterns, if not purposes, change through the centuries, and expectations should. Even the apostles could not do all the table-serving expected by the congregation without neglecting prayer and preaching. Professor Daniel Day Williams of Union Theological Seminary, and associate director of The Study of Theological Education, felt constrained to reply⁹ to Dean Pearson that, however much blame is due to the minister's own weaknesses, the actual tension situations highlighted by Dr. Shrader must not be overlooked, and an integrating conception of the ministry is needed. Professor Williams especially pointed

up, as had others of our authors, the signal contribution of Dr. H. Richard Niebuhr in showing the lack of a clear governing conception of the ministry in seminary education and the church today, and in suggesting the new image of "pastoral director" of the ministering congregation. Such a contemporary reconception, it is to be hoped, might eventually clarify the rightful expectations of the seminary, church, and minister himself, lessen troublesome conflicts and frustrations, and more positively, guide our preparation and service.

But it is not only in *The Study of Theological Education*, with Professor Niebuhr's masterful interpretation of *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*⁸ and the symposium on *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*⁹ that we have seen this problem of the task of the minister attacked. The Professors in the Practical Fields have been at the job for years, rethinking the traditional ministerial offices in functional, contemporary terms. Professor Seward Hiltner has recently introduced us to a Pastoral Theology worked out in terms of three inclusive "perspectives" of the pastor in his ministry—shepherding, communicating, organizing.¹⁰ If we experience initial difficulty in assimilating and relating these to the virtually incommensurate traditional "offices," an even more unfamiliar yet illuminating set of sociological and social psychological categories awaits us in the recent and forthcoming reports of Professor Samuel W. Blizzard, now of Princeton Theological Seminary.

"There are many facets to the minister's self-image," as analyzed by Dr. Blizzard. "One is his concept of the ministry as an occupation distinguishable from the occupational role of other persons. This is his master-role. Another facet is his self-concept in extraprofessional and nonoccupational roles [all subservient to his master-role]. There are other types of clergy roles that may be analyzed from the perspective of the self-image. The integrative role orientation makes it possible for the clergyman as evangelist, educator, father-shepherd, community problem-solver, etc., to focus his master role on specific goals, ends, or objectives. The practitioner roles (preacher, teacher, priest, organizer, administrator, pastor) are means, professional

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skills, that he may use to attain the goals of his ministry."¹¹

Dr. Blizzard sees the parish minister as "the professional leader of the local church, a social system oriented to a theological perspective." The definition of his role is crucial to effective functioning of the church social system in which he is a central actor. The local church's and the minister's role expectations grow up from many sources— theological outlooks, denominational heritage, local church history, community practices and traditions, American culture, *et cetera*. "The problem of the minister in the local church," says Dr. Blizzard, "is to develop an image of himself that is congenial with his theological orientation, that adequately explains his function in the church, and that permits him to be related effectively to all personnel in the social system."¹² The possibilities of conflict are obviously manifold, especially as a minister brings from theology and the seminary a normative order of role priorities only to encounter an almost complete reversal of priorities in the functional expectations of parish and denomination. This is what Dr. Blizzard calls "the minister's dilemma." If these few savory crumbs from under Blizzard's table do not yet promise us an imminent love feast when all parishioners, denominational leaders, and parish ministers sit down in harmonious agreement on the task of the minister, at least we have a taste of the dimensions of the problem, a guard against glib solutions, and an obvious need for grace!

Second. If we are open to a Wesleyan, and a Reformation, and a New Testament answer, it will be grace: the minister's justification, yes, and his sanctification, by grace through faith. As Dr. Southard has shown, the reconception of our ministry, though needed—and it *is* needed—will not suffice: our deeper trouble is always with our image of ourselves. It is true that congregations may expect of us heights of piety, virtue, and service consonant with our calling, and that we strenuously endeavor to fulfill such expectations and to hide from ourselves and others our shortcomings. And it may be that society has taught us to worship the idol of success, and that we lack the perspective and heart for facing and acknowledging failure. But

it is not simply the fault of church and society that we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We are still willing, nay feel obliged, to justify ourselves to ourselves and to others and to God by good all-round performance or a reasonable facsimile thereof, until we are convinced that such posturing is neither effective nor necessary. Can we ministers, in classroom and parish, be convinced, over and over again, of the Good News we offer others yet are often unwilling to appropriate—namely, that *we* who fail, and sin, and fall again, are yet accepted, forgiven, restored? Can we accept grace ourselves and see ourselves as we really are in God's sight, in the light of his *agape*? And then can our earthen vessels convey such accepting, remaking love to our fellows in the ministry, our families, our people, our society? And would such renewed freedom from the bonds of self-justification allow for us and our people a truer devotion and more disciplined service to God and one another? (Perhaps what I have just been led to say applies less to the problematical *tasks* of the minister and more to the problem of the minister himself, especially if he sees his conflicts and failures as due primarily to others' unreasonable expectations!)

Third. Axiomatic likewise, if the minister is to find his authentic role and task today, is that this freedom from self and others is freedom for service to them and God. "With regard to the actual function of the minister," wrote Dr. J. Robert Nelson, "no other description better applies than the phrase *minister verbi divini*, 'the servant of the Word of God'. The fundamental, literal meaning of 'ministry' has always been *diakonia*, or *leitourgia*, i.e., 'service,' of which the life of Jesus was the epitome."³ The task of our ministry is in some sense a continuation of Christ's ministry, and that means, as etymology and event agree, a servant-ministry. "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45 RSV). The disciple, we have been given to understand, is not above his Lord. Self-evident though this seem, we are always in danger of inverting our servanthood into a position of privilege and power; and our present concern over

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smoothing the minister's way in the congregation may vitiate the servant-ministry at its heart. We are not to ask for ease in Zion, free of occupational hazards, risk, and trouble. (I do remember Professor H. H. Farmer's wry reference to a rather luxurious American church assembly ground, the brochure of which bore the legend, "Meet the challenge of God in comfortable surroundings"!)

Preachers of Christ, followers of prophets and apostles and Wesley and Asbury, do not need society and church rendered safe for tender pastors. The Christian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us, belongs not in cloistered seclusion but, like Christ, among foes. "The Kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies," he quotes Luther: "And he who will not suffer this does not want to be of the kingdom of Christ; he wants to be among friends, to sit among roses and lilies, not with the bad people but the devout people. O you blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ had done what you are doing who would ever have been spared?"¹⁴ Add that gloriously mixed and gory metaphor of Isaac Watts:

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed thro' bloody seas?

(The Methodist Hymnal, 284)

It is gratifying to read, somewhat in this vein, the remonstrance of Professor Paul W. Hoon of Union on "Building Up Breaking-Down Parsons."¹⁵ He took Dr. Shrader to task for blaming the laity for the minister's frustrations and breakdown. They too are victims of a culture of "functional specialization," "manic activism and fragmentation," "absence of a unifying spiritual dimension." Their needs are to be served, not avoided or decried. "(To) contend that the minister must be 'protected' is to corrupt the New Testament conception of the ministry as well as the New Testament doctrine of the church," said Dr. Hoon. "No, the problem of the Protestant clergy today is not how to make the ministry more possible. The problem is how to live as redeemed and redeeming men with its impossibil-

ity. . . . While [the] answer will include vocational self-evaluation and psychological self-understanding, its basic elements will be theological and devotional."¹⁶

Fourth. As for what it means to "live as redeemed and redeeming men," to spend and be spent in the service of the Word of God and of God's church and world, we have learned from Professor Niebuhr to find the meaning and task of the ministry within the meaning and task of the ministering community, the church. We have spoken of the need for a new and clearer image of the ministry, of the minister's self-image and of the church's sometimes conflicting conception of his roles: What of the image of the church? How does the minister see the church? And what self-images does the church see?

Perhaps a Methodist minister memorizes these opening words of the ritual for reception of members into the church:

Dearly beloved, the Church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the promotion of his worship and the due administration of his word and ordinances, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversion of the world. All, of every age and station, stand in need of the means of grace which it alone supplies."¹⁷

Alongside this "churchly" conception of the origin, destiny, task, and scope of the church, he may cherish also the more sectarian conception of the early Methodist "United Society" as Wesley saw it in 1743:

Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."¹⁸

Perhaps he ponders the development of this early little church within the church into a far-flung Methodist "connection" of societies, traveling preachers, conferences, and eventually ordained clergy, bishops, and sacraments. His mind moves on to the vast, complex organization of Methodism today, and to its miniature in the local church, and to their parallels in other communions. What have all of these to do, he wonders, with that

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classic Reformation definition preserved in the Anglican and Methodist Articles of Religion?

XIII. *Of the Church.* The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.¹⁹

Or perhaps, as befits his ecumenical and biblical heritage from Wesley, his normative image of the church is better represented by those watchwords of the newer, the ecumenical Reformation of our times. Then the church becomes the covenant People of God, called into community and obedient witnessing service by the age-long gracious action of God; and the renewal of that erring Israel of God in the Body of Christ, the organic union of the graciously restored with their rightful Lord and fellow members in his service; and the continuing, graciously illuminated and empowered community of the Spirit, bringing new life to those within and without the fellowship; in brief, the servant community of the Word of God. And he, the minister, is the servant-leader of such a ministering community.

But when such normative images of the church, the true Church meant by God, are held over the empirical church, he knows this community called not only to the service but also to the judgment, repentance, forgiveness, and empowerment—the justification and sanctification—which are given to him. Then it may be the main task of the minister today, the meaning of his service, to help the church to its rightful self-image and service: to participate in a continuing Reformation, to keep the church and himself aware of and subject to a Word of judgment, grace, and direction. Let the Reformation continue! Let the church be the Church! Let God be God, and reconcile to himself a people long given to other self-images than he would bestow, long prone to heed other words than his!

III

It is these other "words," and the ways we as church and ministry heed them, that concern me in the remainder of this

paper. *Servants of whose word* are we actually today? Here I must become much more subjective and, frankly, troubled in spirit—troubled over these other words than the Word which now subtly, now obtrusively, now invitingly, tend to darken counsel or quench spirit in the ministry to church and world; and troubled, too, over the critic's role thrust upon me.

It is not that I can presume to add significantly to the trenchant criticism in Professor William H. Kirkland's look at "The Organization Man in the Ministry,"²⁰ or Dr. Joseph Sittler's incisive protest against "The Maceration of the Minister,"²¹ or the Raleigh-Durham Study Commission Report to the Oberlin Conference.²² But I feel moved to a further personal protest here, impelled and informed by the complaints and prophetic words of both students and mature pastors, by recent observation of annual conferences, and by personal experience in pastorate and pew—the latter a vantage point preachers too seldom share. Whatever my hidden motives, I confess to a deep-going ambivalence, perhaps inevitable under both the judging and the gracious Word of God. Even times of less turmoil than Jeremiah's call for both tearing down and building up, both criticism and edification, in the faith which reveals norm for both and ultimately is on the side of God's rebuilding. But even Jeremiah was troubled over his obliged dialectic. We are grateful for the privilege of a teaching ministry in the great economy of the church, and especially in the preparation of its ministers. We are sensitive to the fact that most of our problems are not strange new monsters but simply current expressions of our endemic human preference for our limited loves, our shortened vision, our own way—euphemisms aside, our sin. We know, moreover, that attending to problematical aspects of the ministry risks negative distortion, for the ministry is more than problem: it is exciting and glorious calling. Yet as theological teachers we bear special responsibility to acknowledge and proclaim God's judgment on evils in which we share while grateful for the gifts of grace—to criticize those "other words" affecting our church and ministry.

Such criticism may appropriately begin with that word to

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which the professor may be as subservient as the parish minister and church—the insistent word of self, the more demonic for its subtle claims to divine right. Professionalism, clericalism, the authoritarian stance, are too familiar temptations for us all. Dr. Norwood's disclosure of ways in which earlier Methodist lay leadership passed into ministerial control illustrates our more general Protestant failure to realize the priesthood of believers or the meaning of Christian vocation. The minister who speaks of "my church" or "my members" (and what preacher among us does not?) and thanks the folk for coming, may be genuinely and gratefully identified with "his people." But he may also unwittingly betray his and their unrecognized operating principle that the congregation exists to "enjoy" his sermons, implement his plans, secure his salary, comfort, and welfare—in short, for the care and feeding of their pet minister. Their loyalty to Christ and his church may be expressed and measured by their response to the preacher's person and program. They may not be led or taught or allowed to be the church as a community of servants of the Word; they are servants of the minister, who may be servant of self. If he is "successful" in his pastorate he and the congregation expect his "promotion" to a "larger field of service" with higher steeple, salary, and status. This is of course a caricature, an abstraction, "the misery of man without God," for in every minister and church we know, God countermands such words of self by his transforming Word in one who came not to be served but to serve. But the point is that in seminary and parish this correcting, converting Word of the true church and ministry is ever needed, and we are called to help prepare the ministry, beginning with ourselves, for such perspective and practice. The difficulty is great, for who more adroitly than a theological professor can serve the word of self with the language and authority of the eternal Word, and deny to students, colleagues, and laity the priesthood of believers? Let the Reformation continue, beginning in me!

The true meaning of church and ministry is lost also by service to the word of "the others." The congregation may not want to be the Church; it prefers being like "the world" of society and

culture. It may be content to acquiesce in clericalism and ministerial professionalism if it can thereby evade responsibility and avoid criticism by the Word that would identify its true being and task. So much is well said today in humanistic and Christian criticism of culture, and of loss of the individual in the crowd and its ways, that we need not pause to specify the current content of the word of "the others." Nor need we dwell on the ways in which the church's perennial heed to words of Baalim is expressed in conformity to contemporary secular culture, especially to its middle-class business mentality. This is no new problem but no less serious for being old. For the church not only serves the word of the world but would subvert its minister's service of the Word of God. Both victim and voice of culture, it tempts him to conform as it does and resists him when he will not. Its applause for a fashionable prophesier of smooth words turns to fury when he speaks the Word of the Lord. Again we are caricaturing, representing the church only insofar as it serves the wrong word; but it was not an entirely unique ecclesiastical commission which recently identified "the interests of religion" with the preservation of prejudices, and ruled "that the voice of the pulpit should be the voice of the congregation."²⁸ If seminary and minister are to speak to an acculturated church, it is not enough to embody and proclaim the prophetic Word of judgment exposing and condemning such idolatries. Will people heed a Word of judgment unless they also know, and know in experience, the Word of forgiveness available? How can we know and make known the redemptive Word that may ready the church to acknowledge its true norm, and to examine itself critically, penitently, responsively thereby?

But it is the ambiguous word of ecclesiastical institutionalism that even more subtly subverts the service of the Word in church and ministry. The peril is in its very ambiguity. Let us admit no docetic notion that institutions, any more than physical bodies, are essentially evil or even dispensable—they are gifts of creation, and for God's service. Nor let us suppose for ourselves some Archimedean point apart from institutions generally or our own in particular: we are continual participants and

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beneficiaries, even promoters while sometimes detractors, and probably as much a problem as those we might single out for criticism. It ill becomes us to posture in monastic apartness from those engaged in the rough and tumble work of the church in the world, and utter cynical academic slurs. Only responsible criticism will do, pro and con. And we have reason for both. One need but attend a Methodist annual conference to be reminded of the greatness, as well as the liabilities, of the institution and its work. He enters into the devotion of hundreds of ministers and laymen who love their church, the reception of new ministers into conference membership, the high and holy moment of ordination, the poignant one of retirement, the uncertainties of appointments. He witnesses the manifold concerns of the church bidding for attention and support—Christian education and the colleges, orphanage, hospital, home for the aged, evangelism, social reform, laymen's activities, women's work, youth programs, the world mission of the church, as well as theological education. One must be jaundiced indeed not to behold gratefully what an early Methodist publication called "the stately goings of our God in the churches." At least this preacher used to return from annual conference to preach a sermon (replete with conference stories) expressing renewed faith in and loyalty to the church. The word of such an institution deserved to be heard!

Yet this divinely called, indwelt, and employed institution is ever in danger of making itself an idol. Not only words of self and world but also the word of ecclesiastical institutionalism tend to claim priority over service of the Word of God. Not openly, confessedly, but nonetheless actually, churches are disposed to turn from servants into masters, from means to ends in themselves. The ongoing of the institution and its plans so levies upon ministerial and lay devotion that the "Protestant principle" of keeping all the life and thought of the church under the first commandment is implicitly if not explicitly rejected. Heterodoxy in theology seems immaterial, but theological critique of such institutionalism becomes the worst of heresy. Whatever questions the program is discredited as disloyal. It is

no wonder that keen, spiritually fresh young seminarians entering the ministry are troubled over what they see: big fund drives or institutional security and promotion given precedence over moral issues and social justice, with "don't rock the boat" taboos and "avoid controversial issues" temporizing; preoccupation with statistics and externals, crowds and quotas and assessments, with questionable motivation thereto; utilitarian religion, theologically vacuous and even anti-intellectualist, especially where theology might disclose a norm of judgment on myopic institutionalism; denominational imperialism or isolationism occasionally belying ecumenical commitments; immature, ill-prepared youngsters thrust into pastoral vacancies, blind leaders of the blind, to the detriment of their own future ministry as well as the life of their churches; other ministers too harriedly running churches, raising money, and meeting quotas to grow in mind and spirit. Is this the servant community of the Word of God?

An especially disturbing aspect of such institutionalism is its "creeping heteronomy," the growing pressure for performance according to prescription. Laudable programs, well conceived by experts, legitimately authorized at the top, heralded by attractive brochures and slogans, promoted by mass meetings, and dedicated to unexceptionable causes, may be so imposed as to exact coerced consent rather than awaken free response. Ministers and congregations discover decisions made for them rather than by them. Various devices of hidden persuasion—"worship" used manipulatively, appeals to desire for approval, status, promotion—avail to secure agreement. The gospel of the freedom of the Christian man gives way to a new "law" imposed from without.

The complaint is not over the goals or the intentions of our leaders. Who can question that our church should be more evangelistic, educational, missionary, *et cetera*? Or that our inertia, ignorance, and sloth often need the stimulus and direction of strong leadership with vision beyond the local church to the larger connectional work? Or that the crusades, advances, and campaigns are generally timely, needed, and productive of untold good? But there are other leading questions having to

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do with the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. What kinds of motivation, in minister and people, are awakened and used by such heteronomous pressures? Is a compulsive, moralistic churchmanship, readied for "other-directed" programs, preferable to the mature, free "yes-and-no" of responsible persons? Is not a possible "no" the price of a genuine "yes" of truly spiritual response—does not a coerced "yes" make one feel used as a thing rather than called as a person? Is legalistic compliance worth the sacrifice of spiritual creativity, spontaneity, initiative? Finally, what understanding of Holy Spirit underlies the announcement of quotas of souls to be won to Christ and his church—are we to control the Sovereign Lord whose grace invites but never compels our free response?

If such criticisms and questioning of idolatrous institutionalism are again a caricature by selective perception, and need balancing by what was said earlier of the glory of the church; if we see that much else of faithful service to God goes on, and indeed that God accomplishes the work of his church through just such sinful men and institutions; if we acknowledge that our ecclesiastical leaders intend no such perversions of means and ends, such churchly idolatry; if we come finally to see how all of us share in this complicity—all of this is still to confess our need for a ministry prepared in spirit, thought, and skills to lead the church in continuing reconversion into the servant community of the Word of God.

NOTES

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2. *The Christian Century*, LXXIII (April 25, 1956), pp. 508-9.
3. *The Christian Century*, LXXIII (Nov. 7, 1956), pp. 1288-9.
4. "Why Ministers Break Down," *Christianity and Crisis*, XVI (Oct. 29, 1956), pp. 144-5.
5. *Pastoral Psychology*, VIII (Sept., 1957), pp. 9-11, 66.
6. *Harper's Magazine*, CCXV (July, 1957), pp. 65-69.
7. "Ministry under Tension," *Christianity and Crisis*, XVI (Dec. 10, 1956), pp. 169-170.
8. Subtitle, *Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956.

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12. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
13. *The Realm of Redemption: Studies in the Doctrine of the Nature of the Church in Contemporary Protestant Theology* (London: The Epworth Press, 1951), p. 147.
14. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (translated by John W. Doberstein from the fifth German edition, 1949; published London: SCM Press Ltd., 1954), pp. 7f.
15. *The Christian Century*, LXXIV (Nov. 6, 1957) pp. 1313-4.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 1314.
17. *Doctrines and Discipline of The Methodist Church*, 1956 (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1957), Paragraph 1914.
18. From "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies," reprinted in Thomas Jackson's third edition of *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, A.M. (London, 1831), Volume VIII, p. 268. Also in the *Methodist Discipline*, 1956, Paragraph 92.
19. *Discipline*, 1956, Paragraph 73.
20. *The Christian Century*, LXXV (April 23, 1958), pp. 492-4.
21. *The Christian Century*, LXXVI (June 10, 1959), pp. 698-701.
22. *Racial Separation and Class Stratification in the Local Church*. Raleigh-Durham Study Commission Report to the North American Faith and Order Conference on "The Nature of the Unity We Seek." Professor Waldo Beach, commission chairman. Report is in mimeographed form, and is based on a series of study papers by commission members.
23. *Time*, LXXIII (June 22, 1959), p. 47.

V

Beyond Thought

Donald Harvey Tippet

NEARLY a half century ago a British neurologist performed a very interesting experiment in an endeavor to discover hidden reservoirs of power and energy lying dormant within the average person. Three healthy and normal young men were chosen for the experiment. To each of these young men a series of conventional strength tests was given. The amount of power registered was taken as normal or 100 per cent capacity. Then the three young men were hypnotized and told that they were weaklings. While still under hypnotic influence the series of tests was given again. This time the youths were able to demonstrate only 30 per cent of their normal power. After an hour of rest, they were hypnotized a second time; this time they were told that they possessed gigantic strength. While still under hypnotic influence, they were given the tests a third time. To the amazement of all, they recovered not only the 70 per cent they seemed to have lost in the second series of tests, but went on to show a power 40 per cent greater than their normal best. At once the question arose whence this added 40 per cent? The answer was not that hypnosis had given them the extra strength but only that it had helped the lads to release resources they already possessed but under normal conditions had not yet learned to use.

When I read the details of this experiment, it brought back to my mind a story one of my professors used to tell his graduate students in New York University. It was a factual story about a boy he knew personally. For six months the boy had been training for the forthcoming track season. Day after day he practiced high jumping. There was a fence surrounding the pasture where he was doing his jumping. Many times during

the six months he had tried to jump over the fence but always failed. One afternoon while he was jumping, Pedro the bull got out of his stall and made for the boy. The boy cleared the fence with several inches to spare. He had the power and the ability to clear the fence all the time; all he needed was the added inducement the bull provided.

The late Rufus Jones once observed that "there are within reach of all of us vast reservoirs of spiritual energy, if only we knew how to tap them. There are great stores of power, if only we could find the key. Happy are the men and women who, at critical moments of life, succeed in breaking through the walls within themselves and gain access to these storehouses of surplus energy." But for you and me there is an additional obligation; not only must we discover for ourselves effective ways of utilizing these latent physical and spiritual powers, but we must also help our students, first to discover the resources hidden down deep within themselves, then show them how to release them.

In helping students to discover and make use of these hidden spiritual resources we should also help them to realize that their witness will not be confined to their spoken or written words, but even more to the lives they live. In making them acquainted with their own spiritual resources we must compel them to see that the ministry is a great spiritual office. It will be a great mistake if our students carry from our seminaries only the speculative—or, for that matter, only the intellectual. These they must have; and all of our disciplines should join in a noble conspiracy to bring this about. But primarily we are educating men to be ministers of Jesus Christ. Knowledge is prerequisite—and beyond knowledge we need sensitivity, a sense of mission, concern, and most of all, spiritual undergirding. Lacking these, it is hard to see how our students can ever become good ministers of Jesus Christ. Somehow we must help them, while they are acquiring knowledge and technique, to learn how to draw upon their spiritual resources at the same time. More than that, we are under obligation to help them to learn how to cultivate the spiritual along with and beyond the

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acquisition of knowledge.

Not long ago I read an interesting obituary in *The New York Times*. It told of a man who had just died in his eightieth year. Sixty of his eighty years he had spent as a student, the last forty-eight of them in one of America's better universities. Year after year he took one degree after another and during the time received considerably more than his share of academic honors. With all of that accumulated knowledge he should have made a significant contribution to the life of his times, but there is no record that he did anything with his knowledge. His vast store of knowledge did not make him free; his desire for more knowledge became his master and he its slave. The acquisition and the possession of knowledge, even on an encyclopedic scale, important and requisite, was not sufficient. He needed to go beyond knowledge.

Of all the classic friendships, none seems to have captured the imagination more than that of Damon and Pythias unless it be that of Jonathan and David. It seems just a bit strange, however, that Jonathan and David should have been friends at all. Jonathan's father, King Saul, was confident that David was Jonathan's rival for his crown, and Jonathan must have been aware of it too. But friendship seems to be more important to Jonathan than a crown. There came a day when Jonathan was persuaded that his father was determined to slay David. He dared not to be seen in public with his friend, and a secret meeting was out of the question—nevertheless, he knew that despite the risks involved he had to get word of Saul's intention to David. This was imperative; his dearest friend's very life depended upon it.

By prearrangement David had hidden himself by the great stone Ezel. When Jonathan learned of his father's displeasure, he hurried toward the great stone, shooting arrows ahead of him and sending a boy out to retrieve them. Previously, anticipating just such a predicament, he and David had agreed that if Saul was friendly to David's return, Jonathan would fire an arrow off to one side of the great stone and that would indicate that all was well with the king and that it would be quite safe for

him to return. On the other hand, if he shot his arrows over the boy's head and said to him, "The arrows are beyond thee," that would be a sign of danger and David would need to exercise all speed to get out of the country as soon as possible.

As Jonathan neared the stone Ezel, he fired an arrow over the boy's head and sent him after it, and then he shot a second arrow beyond him, and as he did so, he shouted to the boy, "The arrows are beyond thee." He speaks to the boy, but the meaning of the words is for David. The writer of this ancient tale brings it to a conclusion in these words: "So Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the matter."

The true drama was beyond the knowledge of the lad; "he knew nothing." Little did he think that he was being used that day to save the life of a man who one day would be king. He played his part well, but the significance of what he did was beyond his thoughts.

Haven't you felt at times that you were part of a great unseen drama—a drama that had a meaning you were unable to discover? So often, we seem just to be chasing after arrows. Rarely, if ever, do we feel that, unknown to us, we are saving the life of the king! The dull and often monotonous routine of the classroom can become as meaningless as chasing Jonathan's arrows. There's that boy, for example, in the middler year who does not seem to be able to discover any semblance of meaning in a line of Koine Greek, or the senior, who after two and a half years of prodding on your part, continues to split his infinitives and persists in saying, "My congregation has been very kind to my wife and I." And then there is the lad, and he is legion, who has to have every sentence of Reinhold Niebuhr translated and every third word defined. If being a caddy for an archer, chasing Jonathan's arrows is a boy's work without any real significance, how much more meaningless is much of our task in the seminary! And yet how often in our more sanguine moods have we felt that surely there was more to our teaching than was being disclosed by the menial performance in our daily round of duties. Some of us who are older have had such feelings as

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these vindicated. We have lived long enough to see the awkward senior mount the steps of a great pulpit subsequently with poise and grace, and we have heard him preach the word with power and in the finest of the king's English. Most of us, if we live long enough, will enjoy the reward that comes only to him whose years of toil have made the desert in some boy's life bloom as the rose. Some of our "late-bloomers" have brought greater recompense than the "flash-in-the-pan" who never caused us an uneasy moment in his entire seminary career.

There is no doubt but that most men (not just teachers and preachers) at one time or another have felt that there was more to life—more to their life than could be seen on the surface. Primitive man became aware of something going on all around him, of which he knew nothing. He could see Jonathan's arrows and hear his commands, but he was certain that there was a hidden meaning in what Jonathan said that was beyond his comprehension. He attributed all this activity to demons or gods. He was an animist and his world was peopled with demons—for him the stream, rocks, trees, and the wind—all natural phenomena were alive and had personality. If he bumped his head on an overhanging branch of a tree, he was sure that the tree itself had evil intentions and that it had reached out and struck him. And so, cursing the devil in the tree, he struck back. Much of the primitive remains with us today, and like our primeval forebears who knew no better, we (who should know better) curse and strike back, too. Primitive man was sure that there was more going on in this world than meets the eye, and this was his way of describing it. Life, for him, was more than it admitted. He tried desperately to discover what the hidden meaning was. He walked about in what seemed to him empty space—but he could not bring himself to believe that it was altogether empty. He filled the apparent emptiness with demons, and his offspring, many generations removed, were to discover that their "old man" was not altogether wrong in his suspicions. There were no demons out there, it is true, but there are fourteen pounds of pressure against every

square inch of his body—space is not empty, after all! There is no malevolent devil in every tree seeking to do you harm, but there is something in every tree and flower vastly more significant—and more interesting than a devil. How, for example, does a tree know when it is spring? How does it know that the time of the year has rolled around when it is supposed to burst forth in leaves and buds? The best answer we have is not far from our primitive ancestors'. What happens every year when spring comes around is beyond thought. The tree does not think itself into springtime behavior. The spirit of new life is abroad in the land once more. There is something at work beyond thought. Matthew Arnold was right: "there *is* a Power not our own that makes for righteousness."

Let us look at Jonathan's lad again for a moment. We have already mentioned the fact that being a caddy for an archer, even if the archer is the heir apparent to the throne, is a boy's work, and yet, though it was beyond his thought, it achieved a man's purpose. What he did seemed unimportant at the time, but it helped to save a man's life. He was of use to Jonathan, of that he was well aware. That he helped Jonathan to keep his friend from being murdered was beyond his thought. As we look back on the story in relation to subsequent events, we are persuaded that he was used of God to accomplish his purposes. Using this as a springboard, I can hear someone say: "My limited view of religion is good enough for me, just as Jonathan's lad's view of what was taking place was good enough for him." Well, yes, perhaps! The psalmist saw enough of the sky on a starry night to sing out, "The heavens are declaring the glory of God," but think of what he might have seen with the telescope in the Lick Observatory or the 201-inch reflecting giant-eye at Palomar. The heavens haven't changed much since the psalmist's time, but our knowledge of them has. The psalmist did not know that our sun is only a part of a vast galaxy made up of billions of stars which we call the Milky Way. Our nearest neighbor, so far as galaxies are concerned, is Andromeda. If we could travel all the way, nonstop, at the speed of light, which of course is 186,000 miles per second, it would take us

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2,000,000 years to travel from our planet to the borders of Andromeda. The psalmist did not know, nor did the rest of us until Palomar's giant eye permitted us to discover that there are more than one hundred million galaxies beyond Andromeda (how many more no reputable scientist will even make a guess). Light from some of these distant galaxies traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles per second started earthward more than a billion years ago to leave their imprint on photographic plates last night at Palomar. There is a lot of talk today about the conquest of outer space. That's a bigger order than some of us realize. The moon really is not very far removed from us. Traveling at the speed of light we could reach the moon in one and a quarter seconds. For that matter, our sun is only eight minutes away from us, if we travel at the speed of light. Now let's summarize: eight *minutes* to the sun but a billion *years* at the same rate of speed to celestial frontiers we have already photographed at Palomar. With that immensity around him, modern man, with far more reason than the ancient psalmist had, may well repeat the question raised in the Eighth Psalm: "When I look at the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him?" When man is compared with the vastness of the universe, the contrast makes him seem small and insignificant indeed. Away back in the early 1930's, Harry Elmer Barnes wrote: "Astronomically speaking, man is almost totally negligible." Almost immediately, George Albert Coe answered: "Astronomically speaking, man is—the astronomer."

Ben Hecht has issued a call for "A New God For the Space Age," but I wonder if we really need a new god. Maybe a new look at the God we already have would suffice. Mr. Hecht is of the opinion that the God of the Christians is a spent force and that in his place is a vacuum. He wants to fill this vacuum with a new god. But he is mistaken. The vacuum, it is to be resulted from God's departure. If there is a vacuum, it is to be found in the realm of man's thought. Instead of a new god, we need to understand the God we already have. All through the Christian era there have been those who have held mistaken

views of God. The sooner these erroneous concepts are discarded, the better. That precisely is what Jesus did when he came to earth; he helped men in his day discard their immature concepts and then made known to them the God we have ever since called Father. Much about God that was beyond men's thought before Jesus came has been clarified by his life, his teachings, and his death. There is much about him that remains hidden and yet needs clarifying. The vocabulary of the Nicaean Creed may need some drastic readjustments, and its sentences may need rephrasing, but a faith less daring than that of the men who wrote it will not be of much help in a space age.

Frederick F. Shannon was on his way to Orchestra Hall in Chicago one morning when a caterpillar caught his eye. Now a caterpillar in some places would be no novelty—but on Michigan Boulevard in Chicago's Loop it was an event. Late for his sermon, the preacher explained his tardiness to his congregation like this: "When I saw the caterpillar going north, as I was going south, I said to him, 'Good morning, Mr. Caterpillar. Whither bound?' The caterpillar was so absorbed that he hardly deigned to answer. Then going a little way he turned around and said, 'Why, man, I'm on my way to get my wings. Please don't bother me.' 'Your wings,' I said, 'what on earth have you to do with wings?' 'What have I to do with wings?' came the answer. 'Why, I have wings inside me this very moment. I'm going to unpack them one of these days. Come around about June, and I'll show them to you.'"

This little parable by a twentieth-century St. Francis of Assisi should serve as a reminder to you and me and to every seminary teacher and to every preacher, anchored as we are to this terrestrial sphere, that we, too, have wings—and so do our students (although at times it is easier to discern their horns). We have, and so do they, hidden resources we never dreamed of—resources beyond our thinking. Sometimes our work seems trivial and unimportant. All about us we see people doing dramatic and significant things while we seem to be chasing Jonathan's arrows—or rainbows, which is even worse. In our

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depressed moods, how much like crawling caterpillars our students seem. At such a time, how hard it is to realize, or even imagine, that they come equipped with wings. Who knows but that we are come to the Kingdom for such a time as this? A lad engaged in the menial task of retrieving arrows saves a king's life. The boy's confidence in Jonathan was all he had to anchor to, but he did his work the best he knew in what seemed to him at the time an insignificant and monotonous task. As teachers and preachers, we are not unlike that boy. He had Jonathan. We have Jesus Christ. Sydney Laysight said of Jesus, "He wakes desires you never may forget. He shows you stars you never saw before." He talks to a woman by a well on a hot noonday. Up to that moment no one had seen anything but wickedness in her very questionable life. But he discovered for her a goodness within herself that even she had not been aware of before. Beyond men's thoughts of her and beyond her own low estimate of herself, Jesus saw a soul worthy of redemption. He took a handful of nobodies—fishmongers, tax-gatherers, men without standing in the community—and so transformed them that they literally lifted the gates of empires off their hinges and forced history down new channels. He was able to detect new wings hidden under the furry coat of a crawling caterpillar.

Happy is that seminary professor who is gifted as his Master was with inner sight so that he can see the hidden wings, for ours is not only the task of transmitting knowledge but also the responsibility of helping students to discover hidden resources beyond knowledge.

In one of the most frequented galleries in Florence there stands a group carved out of the whitest Cararra marble by Michelangelo. It is called "The Prisoners." The artist has left his figures partially imprisoned in the marble and partly emerging from it. It is quite evident that they are straining to release themselves. Every muscle is taut. But they are unable to free themselves; only the master sculptor could do that. Often, in my own teaching days, as I have looked out upon my class of potential preachers, I have thought of Michelangelo's "Prison-

ers." They are unable, many of them, without help from the outside, to release their finest powers. Important as is our task of transmitting knowledge, it is not our only responsibility; we are commissioned by our Master Teacher to follow in his footsteps, discovering and releasing the hidden resources beyond knowledge.

The highest mountain (if you can call a hill just a little more than a mile high—5,344 feet, to be exact—a mountain) in New York state was known to the Indians as "Tahawas" or the "cloud-splitter" of the Adirondacks. Because it was their highest mountain, the New Yorkers thought that it should bear the name of their most distinguished citizen. After a careful survey and countless hours of debate, it was determined that the name of the mountain should be Mount Marcy—after William Learned Marcy. Mr. Marcy's career was a long and impressive one. He had represented his state in the United States Senate from which he resigned to become governor—an office he held with distinction for six years. Under President Polk he served as secretary of war, and under President Pierce he served as secretary of state. With these honors, and many more, it is no wonder that his fellow citizens should have selected his name for their highest peak. It would never have been, however, were it not that a country schoolteacher refused to believe, as everyone else in the village did, that "Wild Bill" Marcy was altogether incorrigible. This schoolteacher succeeded in establishing what John Stuart Mill used to call "the pervasive tone" in her classroom. And it was from this concomitant rather than from any direct or formal teaching that "Wild Bill" took on a new character. The "pervasive tone" of her classroom, more than any other influence, helped this misbehaving "caterpillar" to find his wings, "to cease to do evil and learn to do good."

Perhaps we should pause long enough to ask ourselves what causes this "pervasive tone of the place." Robert Hutchins, I believe, discovered the answer when he said it is caused by "the character of the teachers." Alfred North Whitehead felt that it was equally important to keep "the habitual vision of greatness" constantly before the students. Whitehead, you will remember,

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advocated the theoretical discussion of ethics as one method of attaining the good life, but he believed that examples of virtuous activity, which presumably had a go-thou-and-do-likewise effect, were even more important. For example, in the pagan world, the *Crito* with its presentation of Socrates behaving with courage and dignity in accordance with principle—or better even, in the Christian world—the life of Jesus and the greatness of his death seem to arouse the heroic and to stimulate one to greatness himself.

Before I conclude I must point out one danger. In our zeal to help release our “prisoners” and to help them discover their wings, we may remain in shackles ourselves. Let it never be said of us what Charles Dickens said of Pecksniff—“he was fuller of virtuous precepts than a copy book but like a guidepost that pointed the way but never went itself.” There are resources hidden in deep reservoirs in each of our students. Our mission will not have been accomplished until we have helped them to discover and to release these resources. But we, too, are “prisoners”; we, too, have “wings” hidden in our “caterpillar” bodies.

Shannon’s caterpillar, inching his way up Michigan Boulevard, cannot of itself liberate its wings—but with an assist from Mother Nature the ugly becomes the beautiful and the creeping crawling begins to fly. So you and I, in our best hours, know that there is something fine in us struggling to be released; and we know too that we need help from the outside. Fortunately for us, help is available. Beyond our thought, beyond our skills and abilities, “there is a Power not our own that makes for righteousness.”

VI

The Methodist Church and Theological Education

John O. Gross

THE RESERVATIONS Methodists have had historically about divinity schools often have been cited to prove that early Methodists held in contempt all kinds of education. To refute this idea, we only need to remember the zeal which John Wesley had for education and his efforts to lift the educational level of Methodist converts. In a trip south with Jesse Lee, after the Christmas Conference, Francis Asbury remarked, "If we are to be the great church of this country that I think we shall be, we must ere long look to the education of the young. We must do it, not by one college only and that for children of the preachers but by schools patronized and supported by all the people in every part of the land. It should never be said that the Methodists are ignorant people." A permanent educational program had to wait, therefore, until early Methodists were psychologically prepared to support schools and colleges.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, a band of extraordinary leaders began to appear. This group included Wilbur Fisk, the first native-born Methodist to hold an earned college degree; Martin Ruter, pioneer educator who through legislation and practice helped to launch the program of higher education in The Methodist Church; John Emory, a superior scholar who assisted in founding Wesleyan University, transferring Dickinson College to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and founding New York University. One lesson our church was to learn is that it takes an atmosphere friendly to scholarship to produce effective leaders. Out of Jesse Lee's work in New England, a region noted for its erudition, came five of the six leaders of the first

half of the nineteenth century who were designated by Matthew Simpson as the most effective and creative in the church. (Soule, Bangs, Fisk, Hedding, Ruter came from New England; Emory from Maryland.)

These men and others prompted American Methodism to take its share of responsibility for educating the new nation. Methodist preachers, they believed, were obligated to provide for the education of Methodist youth. If Methodism was to have a part in molding society, it would have to provide not only for the religious instruction, but for the literary, scientific, and cultural needs of the people also. The church which had been an honored instrument in preaching the gospel to the poor must go further, John Emory said, and place within their reach the pleasures and profits of learning. Stephen Olin, first president of Randolph-Macon College, regarded this educational movement as imperative if the church was to fulfill its destiny. He urged systematic instruction of preachers and held that "Nothing can save us but an able ministry." This could not be except through education, he said.

However, at Randolph-Macon, Methodism's first permanent college, it was necessary to evade anything that might be regarded as professional theological education. The ablest member of the Randolph-Macon faculty, Landon C. Garland, wrote a dissertation against formal theological training. Thirty years later, when Bishop Holland McTyeire made Garland the chancellor of Vanderbilt University, he wrote a series of articles telling why the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, should have a divinity school. As he witnessed the cultural growth of both church and nation, Garland realized that if his church neglected the education of its clergy, it was doomed.

Many early Methodists feared that a formal theological education would weaken the itineracy and deaden the evangelical ardor of its ministers. This fear continued through the nineteenth century. Bishop George F. Pierce of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, vigorously opposed the founding of that church's first divinity school at Vanderbilt University. "It is my opinion," he said, "that every dollar invested in a theological

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school will be a damage to Methodism. Had I a million I would not give a dime for such an object."

In the North, Peter Cartwright described educated preachers from the East as "lettuce growing under the shade of a peach tree." The biographer of Mentor Graham, Lincoln's schoolmaster, in contrasting Cartwright with Lincoln, contended that Cartwright wanted the emoluments of education without accepting its discipline. Mentor Graham pictured Abraham Lincoln studying by the light of the fire. He pictured Peter Cartwright depending upon his honorary D.D. for educational prestige. Cartwright, however, should not be caricatured as an enemy of learning. The record shows that he was involved in the founding of three Methodist colleges in Illinois. As a member of the Illinois legislature, he wrote the bill creating the university.

To understand the attitude of nineteenth-century Methodism toward ministerial education, it is necessary to notice John Wesley's plan for the education of his preachers. There is a bit of history here that has had far-reaching influence in the life of the church. I summarize it with the awareness of repeating some facts which have already been noted elsewhere in this volume.

Wesley believed that the success of his preachers depended upon their intellectual growth. In 1768 he attributed the decline in religion to their neglect of earnest study.

Most of Wesley's preachers came from the trades and not from the universities. For this reason he wanted them to acquire a broad general knowledge. At the conference of 1770, it was decided that any preacher who neglected his studies to trade in "cloth, hardware, pills, drops, balsams, or medicines of any kind" would not be considered any longer a traveling preacher. Wesley insisted that his preachers spend five hours of every day in hard study. In 1745 he provided for them a list of books covering practical and doctrinal divinity, philosophy, astronomy, poetry, history, and other subjects. He expected them to read deeply and widely. Through this regulated course of reading these men, Wesley said, "were able to go through such an examination in substantial, practical, experimental divinity as few of our candi-

dates for holy orders even in the university [were] able to do."

Francis Asbury, who as a young preacher had studied under John Wesley in the New Room at Bristol, continued the Wesleyan concern for growth. Once he was asked, "How is it that you take men from the tail of the plough, the blacksmith's shop, the carpenter's bench and, without sending them to any college or divinity school, set them to preach at once, and in a few years they become able ministers of the New Testament, equal, if not superior, to our men trained in collegiate and theological halls?" He replied: "We tell one another all we know, and then use it at once. A penny used is better than an idle dollar. You study books, we study men, the Bible, the hymnbook, and Mr. Wesley's sermons, and are instant in season and out of season. I once picked up a fiddler, and he became a saint and a great preacher."

Henry Ward Beecher in his *Yale Lectures on Preaching* describes a circuit rider by the name of James Havens, who because of the color of his hair, was affectionately nicknamed "Old Sorrel."

I knew good "Old Sorrel," . . . of Indiana; now a sound, well-educated, cultivated man, a man of great influence and power. But when he first went on the circuit in Whitewater Valley, he didn't know enough to tell the number of the verse of the text. He had to count off from the beginning, "one, two, three, four," in order to announce "the fourth chapter and the sixteenth verse." They take just such men in the West, and put them into the field and set them at work; and they *grow* all the time. They are reading as they ride; their library is in their saddlebags; they are reading in the cabins. They unfold slowly, but the beauty of it is, that they are all the time bringing what knowledge they have, to bear upon other men.

In a thesis written by Kenneth E. Rowe (A.B., Drew University, 1959) on "The Background and Education of Methodist Ministers in the United States, 1790-1860, as Revealed in Their Autobiographies," there is this tribute to the Methodist ministers:

The pioneer Methodist preacher thirsted for education. This is a phase of pioneer Methodism, denominationally and individually,

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which has been grossly misrepresented in many studies in the history of American Methodism. It is true that the Methodist clergy were poorly educated when compared with certain other denominations; yet in spite of the difficulty of securing books and the lack of good educational institutions and qualified instructors, the pioneer Methodist circuit riders were surprisingly well educated. There were, however, a few Methodist preachers who did enjoy the best educational advantage which the early nineteenth-century America offered.

This quotation shows the effectiveness of the pattern of study inherited from Wesley. Because of it, plans for formal theological education have had to struggle to live. Pioneers like John Dempster, Holland N. McTyeire, and William Fairfield Warren knew the limitations of the self-study program. They urged the founding of divinity schools. When close vigilance over the training of young preachers was relaxed and the course of study tended toward being one in name only, such men as Dr. Jesse Cuninggim of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Dr. Allen MacRossie of the Methodist Episcopal Church sought to make the conference course of study, lean as it was, a better educational instrument. At the same time the prejudice against theological schools declined and their place in the Methodist movement became better understood.

The past twenty-five years have witnessed the greatest period of growth for our theological schools. The B.D. degree has become the basis for admission to the itinerant ministry. This past year 82 per cent of all persons received into full connection were graduates of theological seminaries. In the past decade enrollments in our seminaries have increased 87 per cent. By 1970 the number of men studying in our theological schools should reach five thousand.

Today the atmosphere in our church is more congenial for theological schools than ever before. These schools in the past have labored under severe handicaps imposed by inadequate financial support. The church itself assumed only small responsibility for their maintenance. Their physical plants and endowments came from gifts made by such philanthropists as the Dukes, Clanders, Wendells, Iliffs, and Perkinses. These persons

did for our schools what the church itself had not been ready to do.

The survey¹ of Methodist theological education made in 1947 by the Division of Educational Institutions and directed by Dr. John L. Seaton helped to jar the complacency in the schools and to lift the sights of the church. Methodists learned that their schools were not prepared to serve effectively their day. The survey showed that the church must provide for the schools through its connexional program. The church was then giving about \$300,000 annually. The survey called upon the schools to re-examine their educational purposes and practices. Standards needed to be raised, faculties enlarged and libraries enriched.

The recommendation to the General Conference of 1948 for increased funds was answered in the traditional Methodist way by setting up a special committee. No committee ever raised took its responsibilities more seriously or produced better results. Under the leadership of Bishop Richard C. Raines the condition of these institutions was made known to the church. As a result the General Conference of 1952 appropriated \$800,000 for them. This past year more than \$1,000,000 was distributed to the schools.

Now, because of this more generous support from the church, the schools possess many elements of strength where once there were serious weaknesses. Faculty salaries, while still not adequate, are more in line with the responsibilities which go with the work. Libraries have been expanded. Retirement provisions have been established. A climate has been set in which the schools may now move forward. In the past six years, we have witnessed the finest growth ever known for Methodist theological schools. Their operational budgets have risen from \$1,056,333 to \$4,333,588.

The Division of Educational Institutions through its office of Theological Schools, with Bishop Donald H. Tippet as chairman and Dr. Gerald O. McCulloh as director, has had a share in this

¹ Members of the survey staff: John K. Benton, Clarence T. Craig, John L. Seaton, and W. W. Sweet.

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advance. When the General Conference of 1952 placed the Commission on Ministerial Training and Methodist theological schools in the Division of Educational Institutions and set up the Department of Ministerial Education, it put theological education in the main stream of the church's educational work.

The disciplinary plan to give the Division of Educational Institutions an advisory relationship to all Methodist schools and colleges has been observed in connection with the seminaries. This division is a co-operative agency—not an administrative one for the schools. Decisions on the internal administration of Methodist institutions rest with them. While we will always rejoice when wise decisions are made and inwardly regret the kind which create problems, this division does not assume that it has, nor does it desire to have, veto power on decisions of the schools. As a World Service agency it bases its usefulness upon giving the sort of counsel that will encourage the development of the highest standards of education.

Every Methodist theological school has the potential for becoming a stronger and more courageous educational institution. The administrators should recognize that inferior educational efforts will be felt in the life of the church in the years to come. Their regular meetings should not be consumed wholly with academic housekeeping, but should also deal with the profound purposes such as is being done in this convocation. The church wants its schools to be pathfinders.

It will not be possible here to note anything more than a few open doors for the educational enrichment of our ministry. The theological schools, having now a liaison relationship with eight universities, 71 senior and 18 junior colleges, can draw upon a vast store of educational resources. They can work with these Methodist institutions from which half of their students come to recruit men better prepared for the Christian ministry. We need students for our theological schools who have had the kind of mental discipline which gives them the ability to concentrate, learn, and reflect. Our church colleges must realize that students who have had "unbalanced, uninspiring and undisciplined liberal

education" are not properly prepared to study for the Christian ministry.

The need for men with cultivated minds gave rise to the church's first efforts in Christian liberal education. Origen, who pioneered in educational work, realized that the church would not succeed with its world mission unless it had scholars who could meet the educated men of their day on their own ground. The conviction that a wide knowledge of all learning was needed drew liberal education into the Christian orbit and furnished the basic intellectual discipline for students specializing in theology. After a review of the liberal subjects as taught in non-Christian schools, Origen recognized that this sort of education would be helpful to Christians in their understanding of Scriptures. Since Origen wanted his students to grow into an intelligent Christianity, he knew that it was necessary for intelligence itself to grow in them. Growth comes from the acquisition of intellectual skills, the assimilation of a body of knowledge, and the initiation into the finest traditions of the culture.

The intimate relationship between liberal education and theological studies requires that we devise better plans for continuity with many undergraduate courses. For example, when theological schools are criticized for not giving adequate attention to the understanding and interpretation of our American cultural heritage, the answer calls for more intensive work in church history. But would more hours than are now given in the seminary in church history be needed if the preministerial student while taking work in American history had some marginal or collateral assignments on the part the church has had in the shaping of our culture? Science majors sometimes receive assignments beyond those of regular students who are taking science courses for cultural purposes only. Likewise, ministerial students should be encouraged to carry an awareness of their total educational objectives into all parts of their undergraduate training. This would give them a wider picture of the basic requirements for a Christian minister's work.

To illustrate the possibility of co-operation between the theological and undergraduate schools, let us note the effect it

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can have on work in religious education. We know that the Christian minister in our day carries heavy responsibilities in Christian education. As a local pastor, he is also the head of a church school—sometimes as large as a consolidated community school. An adequate understanding of the educational processes is needed if the resources of the Christian religion are made available to his people. Would not pastors be better prepared for their educational responsibilities if they were encouraged while in college to take advantage of the opportunities offered in educational and social psychology, and principles and techniques of teaching? Some practice teaching or laboratory school techniques would prevent a pastor from being what one religious educator calls “a lost ball in high weeds with a class of boys or girls at 9:30 on Sunday morning.”

From this point on I want to stress a few of the distinctive obligations of the theological schools to The Methodist Church. In saying this, I am aware of the deepened fellowship among Protestant churches and the improved prospects for church unity. However, nothing could be more disastrous than for the Protestant churches to merge into an amorphous mass and discard the distinctive values developed through their traditions. All the churches which enter into plans of union should bring such aspects of truth as have been stressed by them individually. If The Methodist Church does not carry over into the total life of Christendom the unique Methodist flavor produced by our movement, it will not contribute its best to union.

Dr. Eric Baker, president of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, says that Methodists have a distinctive ethos to which the Holy Spirit has committed many treasures. These treasures are important for building up our own faith. They are to be held in trust for the universal church of Jesus Christ.

Theological education in The Methodist Church, we believe, should help Methodist ministers to appreciate the significance of what we call our itineracy. This historic Methodist term originated in English Methodism and distinguishes the Methodist minister from clergymen of other churches. John Wesley found that the settled parish system of the established church was

self-centered and lacked aggressiveness. He set up a plan for moving preachers at regular intervals from circuit to circuit. Wesley did not adopt this system because he regarded it as scriptural, but for the practical reason that it worked. He, himself, held that "neither Christ nor his apostles prescribed any particular form of church government" and that the Anglican doctrine affirming the mystical transmission of spiritual authority through the episcopacy was a "fable." Methodism from the outset has been controlled by an eclectic spirit that has directed it in the adoption of means well adapted to accomplish its great design.

The itinerant system was transferred to America by Bishop Asbury. It accounts to a large extent for the rapid growth of early Methodism. Abel Stevens distinguished between the itinerant and stationary pastor. The latter waited for the people to call him—the Methodist minister went forth to call the people. This sort of passion for persons should never be lost in either a long or short pastorate. The itineracy and also a noticeable flavor of congregationalism are a part of a tradition.

The itineracy brought strength to our connectional system. The first Methodist preachers in America were pledged to act in connection with Mr. Wesley. Acting in connection with work beyond the parish has helped the Methodist system in the 175 years of our history to grow into a fabulous structure of various service institutions, boards and agencies. The local church is not a separate unit existing by itself, but part of a vast movement projected to carry the Christian message into every area of life in every part of the world. The educational, evangelistic, missionary, and social concerns which came into being with Methodism are a part of the life of the church and it is weakened if they are neglected or ignored.

In a connectional system like ours, the minister of the church is the central factor in the program of organized Christianity. Candidates for the Methodist ministry should understand the nature of the church's mission, not only in the local parish but also throughout the world. A constructive attitude toward the tenets and practices of The Methodist Church, while of course

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subject to criticism, does not require a compromise with scholarship or truth.

Once when American Methodists were showing a widespread lapse in extrachurch interest, Nathan Bangs feared that they seemed to be approaching a state of "nonage." They had come to the conclusion that they had nothing to do but to preach the gospel and to attend to those duties connected with the local church. This is inconsistent with our ministry whether found in a young church in its "nonage" or in an old church in its dotage.

While all our theological education should be intellectually competent and intensely practical, it should not lose sight of its main mission—namely, to prepare men to mediate the gospel by word and deed. Our theological education efforts, therefore, should be connected with the historic redemptive aims associated with the mission of our church.

The rise of Methodism from a sect often derided for its uneducated preachers, its buoyant hymn singing and shouting, to one of power and influence is a part of the saga of American history. In the words of Weisberger, the first preachers were sent "where sinners were in need of the saving word." To accomplish their mission they "roughed it along trails in snow and rain, taking their chances on bears, wolves, cutthroats and Indians. They put up where they could find local hospitality which usually meant cornbread and a spot for sleeping on the dirt floor by the fire. They spent a good part of their lives hungry, wet, cold, verminous, and saddlesore, and if they did not die young of consumption, they could expect an old age of rheumatism and dyspepsia."

The theology of these early Methodist ministers was what Wesley called "the common fundamentals of Christianity." It assumed that man was a sinner and helpless in himself. For his redemption adequate provision had been made through faith in Christ. If someone had asked the average Methodist preacher for a summary of his beliefs, he could have used Wesley's own words: "Our main doctrines—which include all the rest, are three—that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account as it were the porch of religion, the next the

door, the third religion itself." While we recognize that there was nothing original here, we do know that Wesley breathed new life into a theology that had become a set of pale and colorless syllables out of which all reality had been drained.

The simple propositions of the itinerants' theology have now grown into many books, some elaborate tomes which call for profound thinking and study. In this development intelligent understanding and reasoning are quite necessary. But it is easy to give intellectual interest priority and stop there. One noted theologian remarked that his interest in theology is purely intellectual and that he has no special concern for its practical applications. That our seminaries must have scholars able to reach beyond the surface is not a debatable issue. But in the transfer of knowledge, redemptive aims should not be made secondary to intellectual interest. Methodist ministers must know that the Christian gospel is more than just an ethic or morality. The teaching of any theological system that does not give high priority to the gospel and its significance is, as the late Professor Lowstutter used to say, like having Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with Hamlet left out.

We are aware that the requirements for the making of a Methodist minister go beyond educational preparation. Once when Dr. Pierce Harris of Atlanta, Georgia, was told by a boy that he was planning to enter the ministry, Dr. Harris said, "Son, don't do it. The ministry is a poor profession. The minister must make more speeches than a lawyer, more calls than a doctor, and do more talking than a life insurance agent. Furthermore, the pay is not very good. But, son, if God has laid his hand upon your heart and called you to the ministry, don't let anything stop you." The prospective minister should know that the ministry is an exacting calling, heavily freighted with all sorts of difficulties, and that these will be insurmountable without a sense of mission.

The difficulty of enlisting men of high intellectual ability for the Christian ministry is not new. The church through the centuries has had to do its work with many persons who were not "wise after the flesh." In Wesley's time, the men who felt divinely

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called to the work of the ministry were often very conscious of their limitations, but their new-found enthusiasm made them able to hold their own among their Anglican and dissenting brethren who had been fortunate enough to have university training.

Concerned as we are with the recruiting of men for the Christian ministry possessing high I.Q.'s and exceptional promise for service, we lament their scarcity. Dr. Richard Bender of the staff of the Division of Educational Institutions, who has studied the scholastic qualifications of ministerial students in fourteen colleges, found that 72 per cent of the total had grade averages of B— or less. These, of course, are a sampling from a fraction of our institutions and do include students in all four years of college work. Grade averages if taken of seniors alone would make a difference. The change would be at least 10 per cent and maybe higher in consideration of the special leadership talents found in many persons of average ability along with the fact that some individuals are by nature "late bloomers." What should concern all interested in ministerial education is that the grade average for ministerial students tends to be lower than for such preprofessional groups as medicine, law, engineering, and science. We must persistently labor to attract our ablest students to the Christian ministry.

We must remember, however, that many individuals of limited ability have been able to rise above their natural handicaps because of their deep awareness of a divine vocation. The sense of mission supplies something beyond what formal training imparts. It lifts ordinary people out of their ordinariness and helps them to do the unusual. It transforms men who might in other lines of work expect only a mediocre existence into individuals who have high and great success. It literally shoves a person beyond the predictions of psychological and aptitude tests.

Such a sense of mission is closely allied to one's capacity for spiritual discernment. Paul had this in mind when he declared that we are not sufficient to ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God who qualifies us to be his ministers. Such qualification is of the spirit. "The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Henry Drummond attributed his great influence among the educated groups to the awareness of God in his life. It gave his message power and moral passion. The minister whose soul is sensitized to the presence of God has an outlook on life different than that found in the secular world. The late Professor Thomas R. Kelly described the secular mind as an abbreviated and fragmented mind which reflects only a part of man's nature and neglects his deeper powers and resources. On the contrary, the spiritual mind involves the whole of man, embraces his relations with time within their true ground and setting, and keeps him close to the sources of divine creativity.

The theological student should learn that there is an intimate relationship between the ability of a minister to lead his people into an understanding of the Christian faith and his personal religious life. Unless a minister takes time for the disciplining of his own spirit, he will not be a good shepherd of his flock.

Several years ago a scientist in the University of Wisconsin found that cattle might eat enormous amounts of food and yet be starving to death. Continued research, however, helped him to discover that life-giving food contains elements called vitamins which furnish the vitality necessary for the nourishing of life. It is recognized now that the value of any food depends upon its vitamin content.

There is a parallel here between the physical and spiritual which should not be overlooked. Too often "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." Some of our forefathers who were profound students of spiritual reality used the word "unction" to describe the constituent element essential for spiritual nutrition. MacArthur's memorable words that "it must be of the spirit if we are able to save the flesh," rise to challenge us. As a people we have made great progress in the physical sciences but all too little in the deeper things of life. The world's problem basically is theological, and its solution rests not with political revolutionists but with leaders willing to attempt great things for God. Of such leaders "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

We Methodists do have a character and bearing that are dis-

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tinctly our own. They have come to us from a past rich in traditions. Let us rejoice, therefore, in the way God has led us and pray for the humility and strength to use our educational institutions with their intellectual resources to serve the present age as effectively as our forefathers served theirs.

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